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AN INDIAN JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE

ISSN 0097-0239

ARCHOHM AT 25

Still Young, Hungry & Fearless

SPACES OF INTEREST

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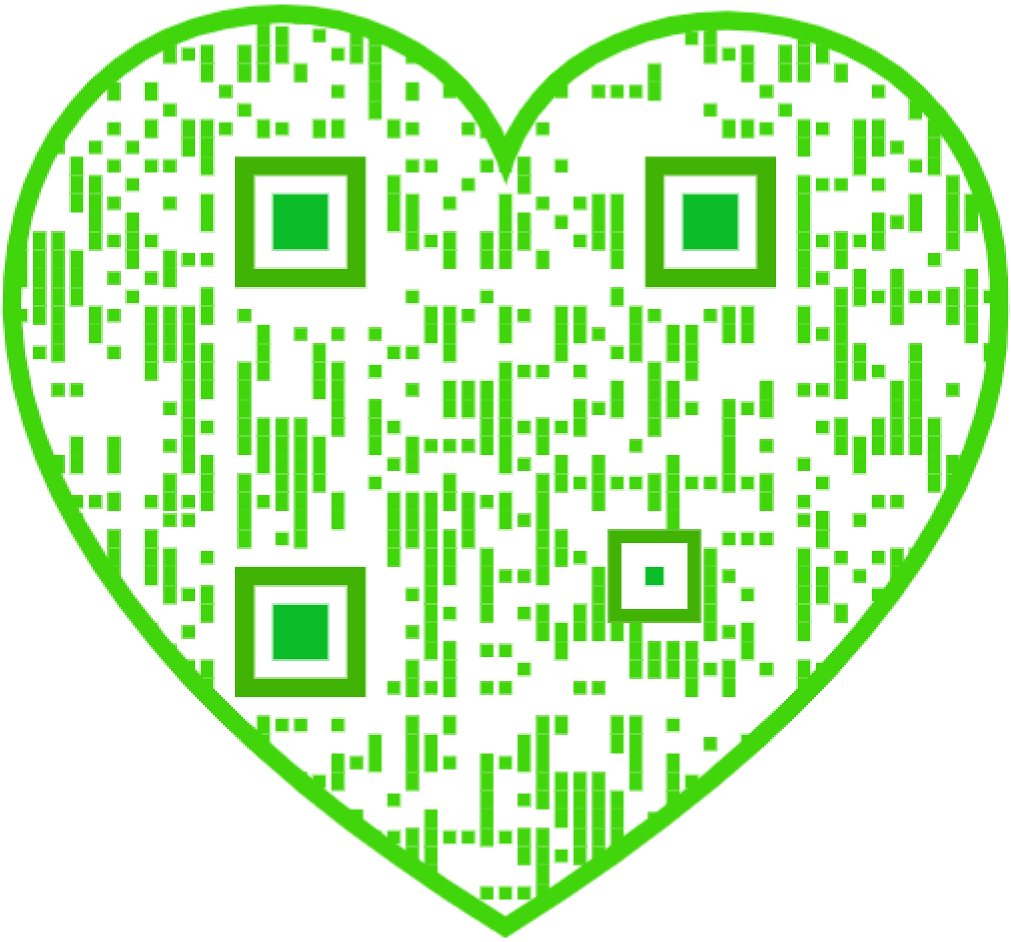

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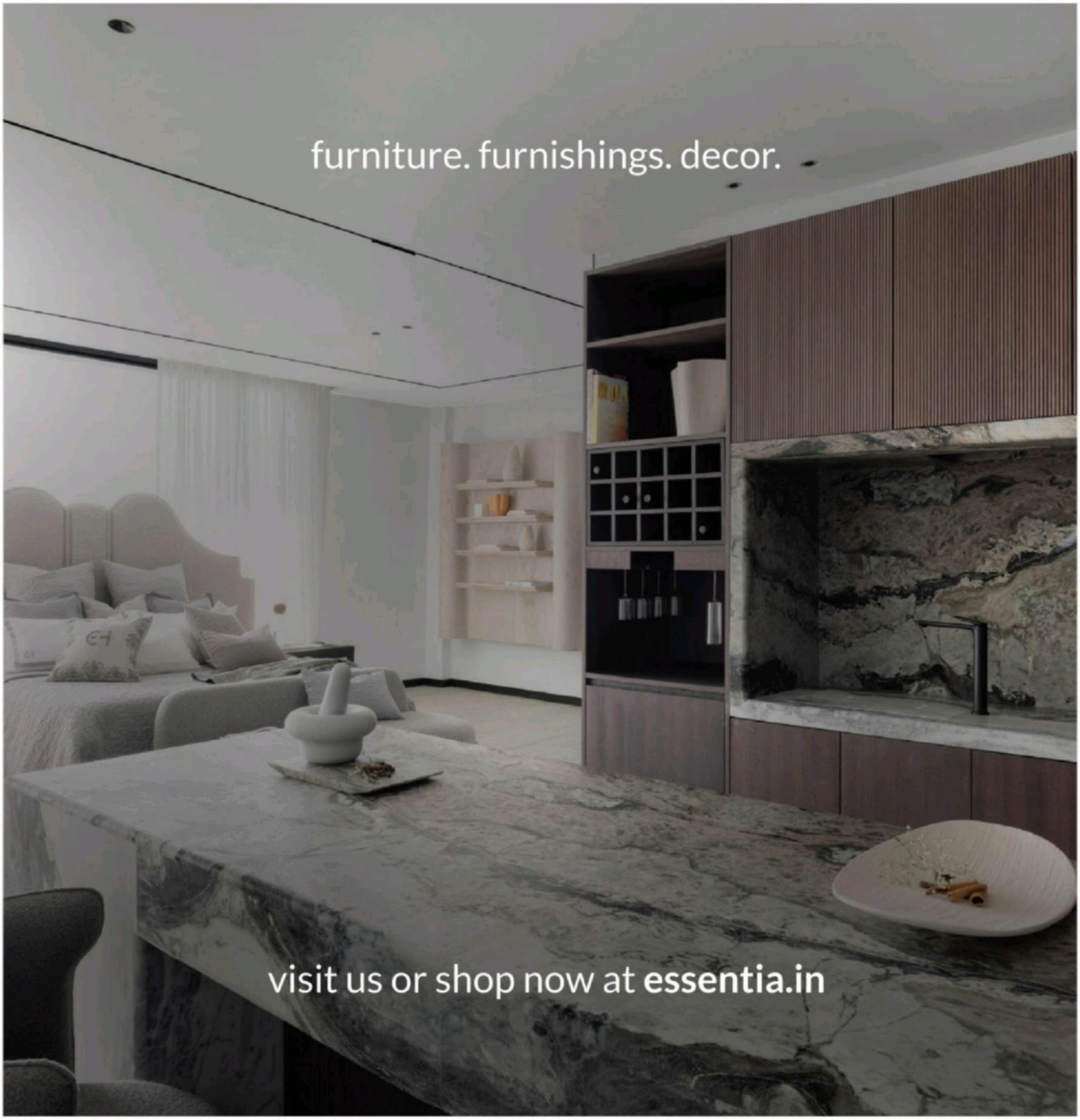

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A deep dive into the studio that's reshaping India's built environment with spontaneity, diplomacy, and a 'people-first' spirit. Sourabh Gupta, Mridu Sahai Patnaik, and Kunal Savarkar reflect on a legacy that refuses categorisation and tackles everything

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ARCHOHM AT 25
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SPACES OF INTEREST

ON THE COVER:
**Sourabh Gupta,
Mridu Sahai Patnaik, and
Kunal Savarkar**

PHOTO CREDIT:
HARRIS GEORGE STEPHEN

All drawings and visuals for the projects and articles, unless mentioned otherwise, are courtesy the architects/authors.

"Architecture is the learned game, correct and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light."
—LE CORBUSIER

India is upgrading. And as we navigate the complexities of urbanisation, climate change, and technological disruption, the importance of well-designed public infrastructure has never been more critical. And this underscores the architect's dual role as both a designer and a key player in shaping the urban landscape.

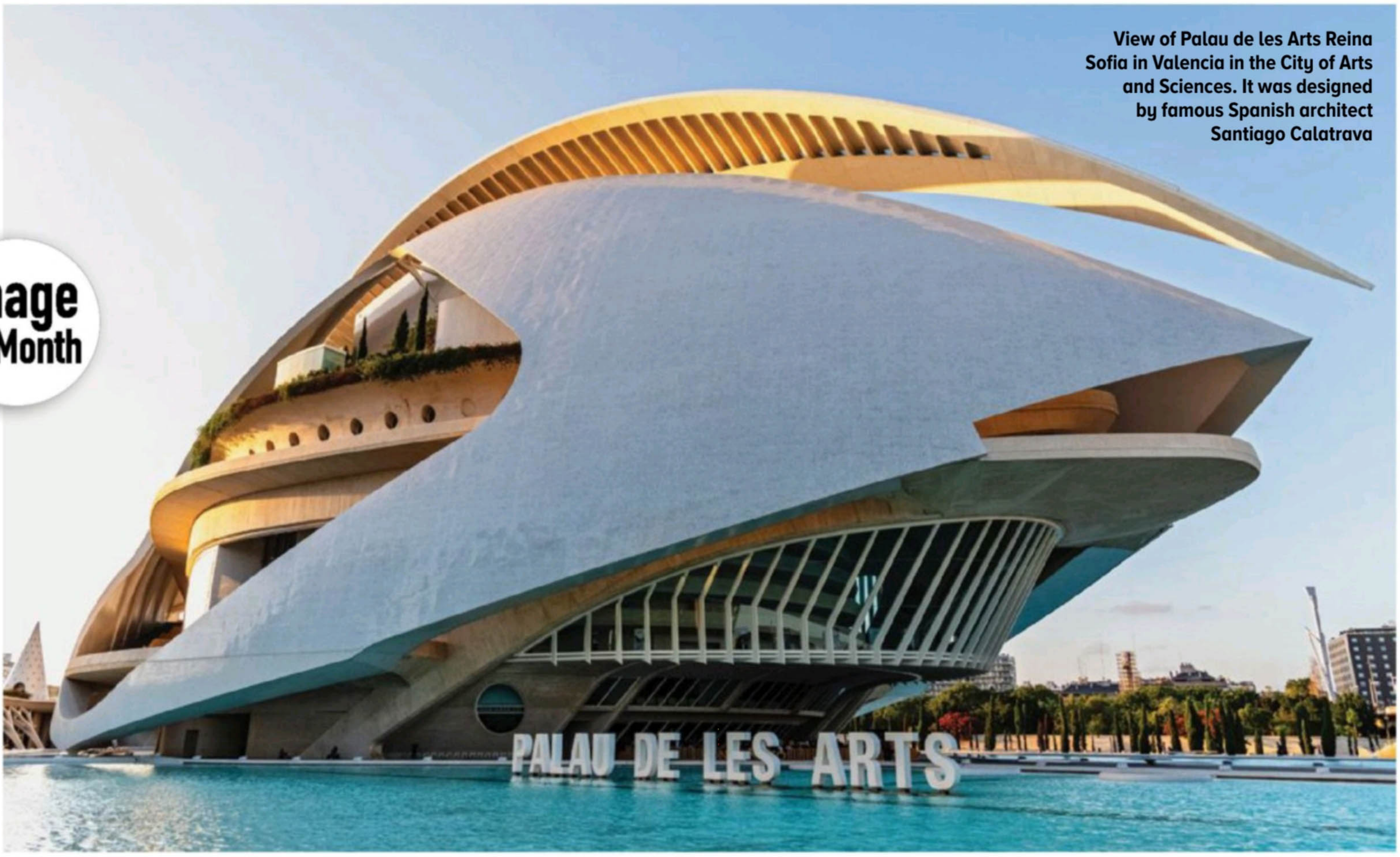
In the cover feature, we sit down with the visionary leaders behind Noida-based multidisciplinary firm Archohm, delving into their insights, experiences, and perspectives on architecture, design, and innovation. Through an in-depth conversation with the principals — Sourabh Gupta, Mridu Sahai and Kunal Savarkar, we explore their journey, philosophies, and the iconic spaces that they have designed. As they reminisce about their quarter-century journey, the founders and principals of Archohm also share their exciting plans and aspirations for the future.

Our featured projects showcase the best of Indian design — from the extensive redevelopment of the Bengaluru Cantonment Railway Centre, to a stunning home in Mumbai, the issue is all about design that makes an impact.

Happy Reading!

(Seema Sreedharan)
Editor

Image of the Month



View of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia in the City of Arts and Sciences. It was designed by famous Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava

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DESIGN INTEL

What's making waves in architecture, interiors and beyond? The future is unfolding, and we're here to catch it first

Compiled by Ankita Rathod

Shilpa Gupta's Dream Language Lights Up Dubai

Dubai – What happens when a dream becomes public, but in reverse? Artist Shilpa Gupta is asking exactly that with her newest public artwork, *Still They Know Not What I Dream,* now lighting up The Yard at Alserkal Avenue as part of the Alserkal Art Week (13–20 April 2025).

Commissioned by the Alserkal Arts Foundation and supported by Ishara Art Foundation, the glowing, reverse-script sculpture stops you in your tracks. At first glance, it's a riddle; step closer, and it reveals Gupta's signature preoccupation with the seen vs. the unseen—censorship, visibility, and the politics of perception.

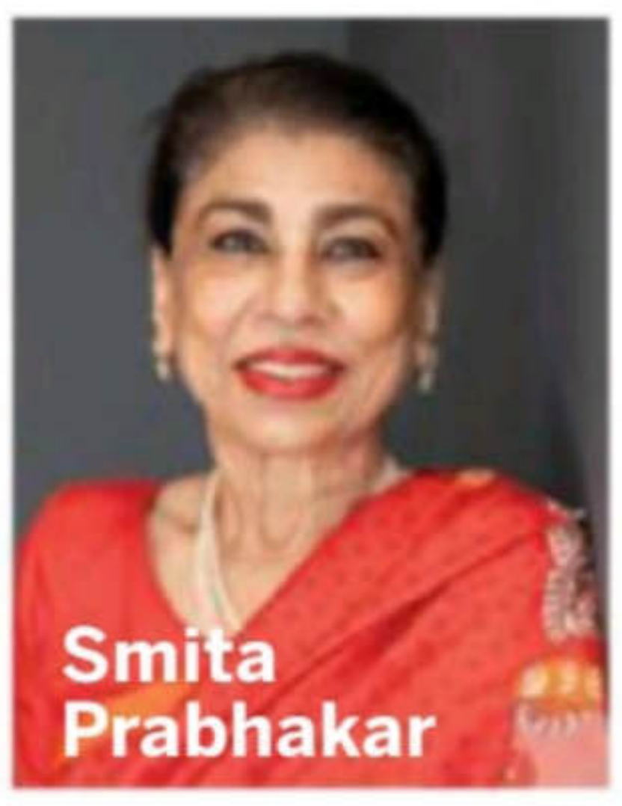
The work is part of the group project *Between a Beach and a Slope,* curated by Fatoş Üstek, but Gupta fans are in for a double treat. Just around the corner, her solo show *Lines of Flight,* curated by Sabih Ahmed, is running at Ishara Art Foundation until 31 May. That one's a deep dive—featuring over two decades of Gupta's multidisciplinary work, from sound and drawing to site-specific interventions.

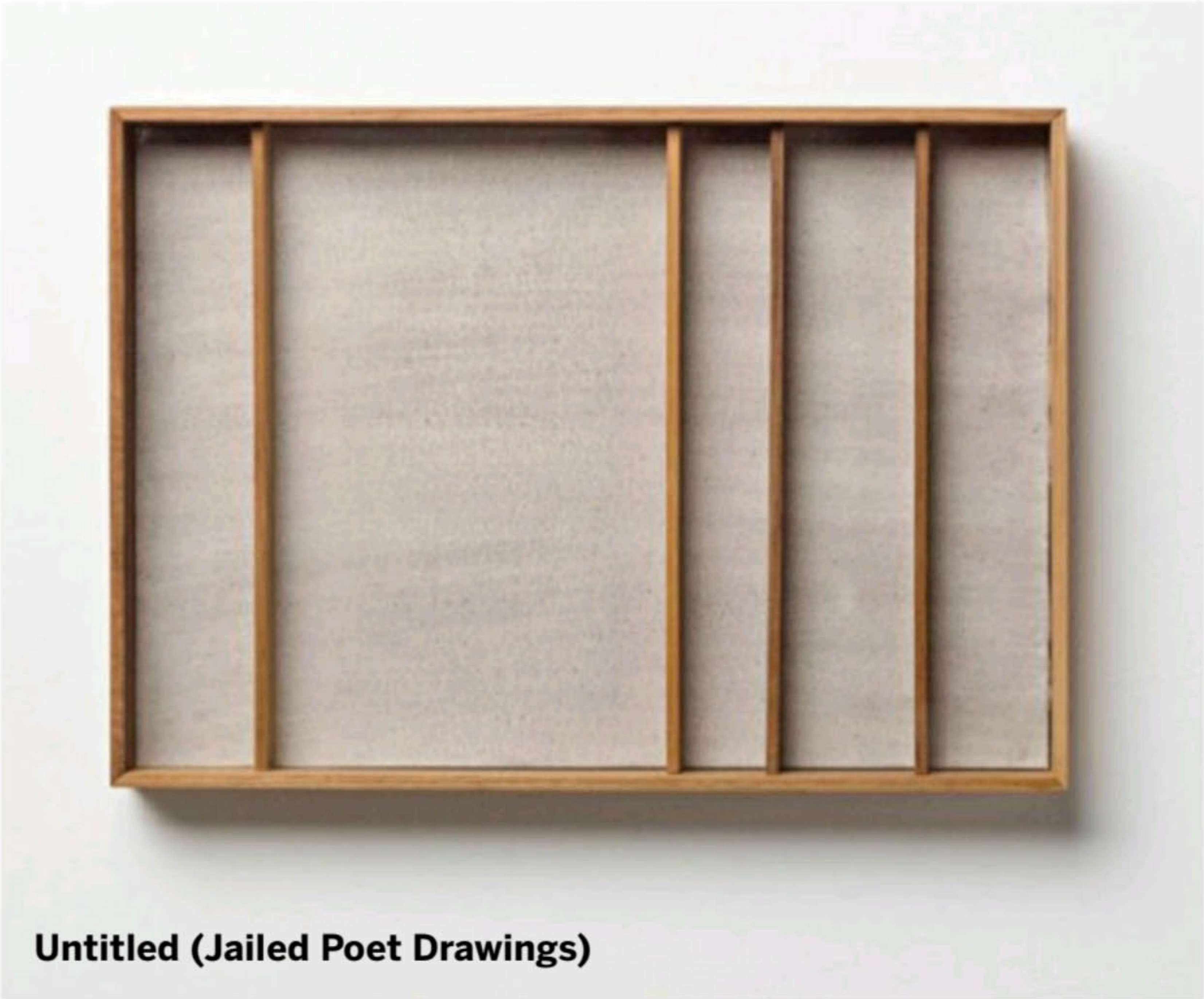
NOTABLE WORKS
- There Is No Border Here (2005)
- 100 Hand Drawn Maps of My Country (2008)
- Singing Cloud (2008–09)
- Someone Else (2011)

Shilpa Gupta

Sabih Ahmed

Sasha Altaf


Smita Prabhakar

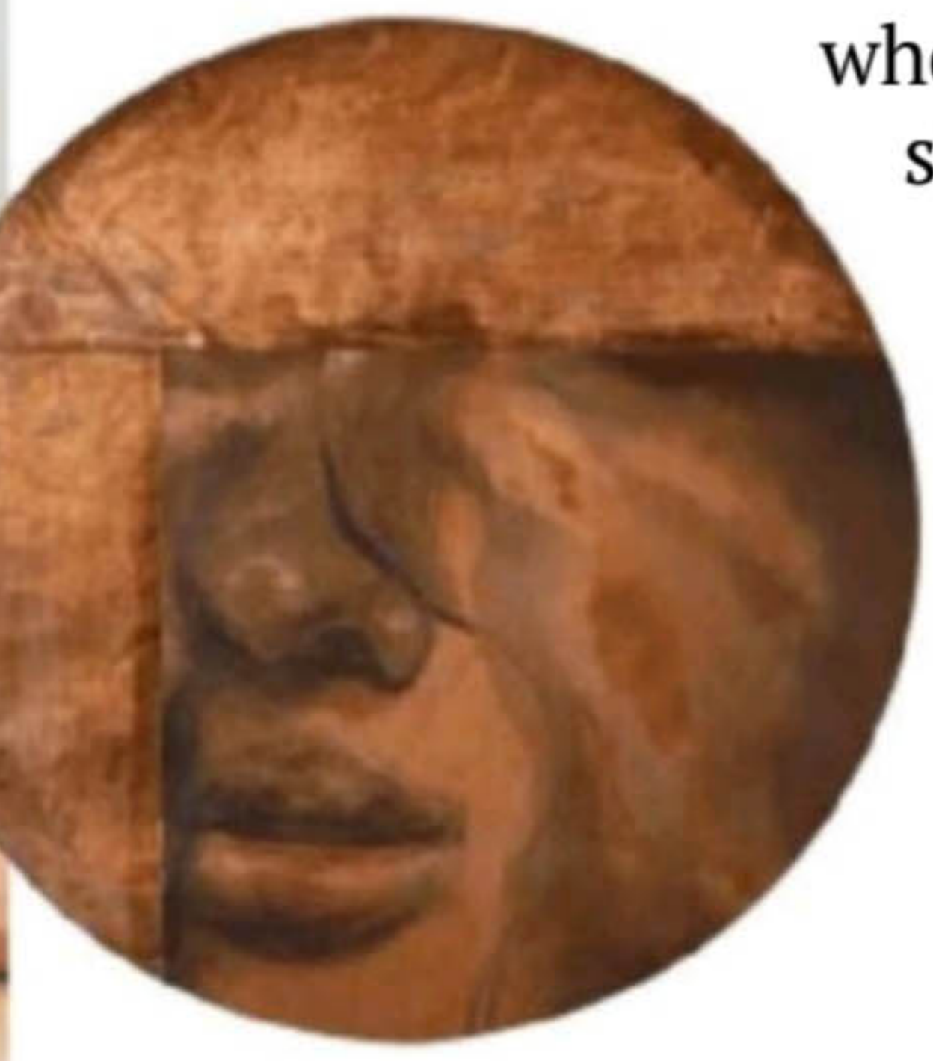

Untitled (Jailed Poet Drawings)

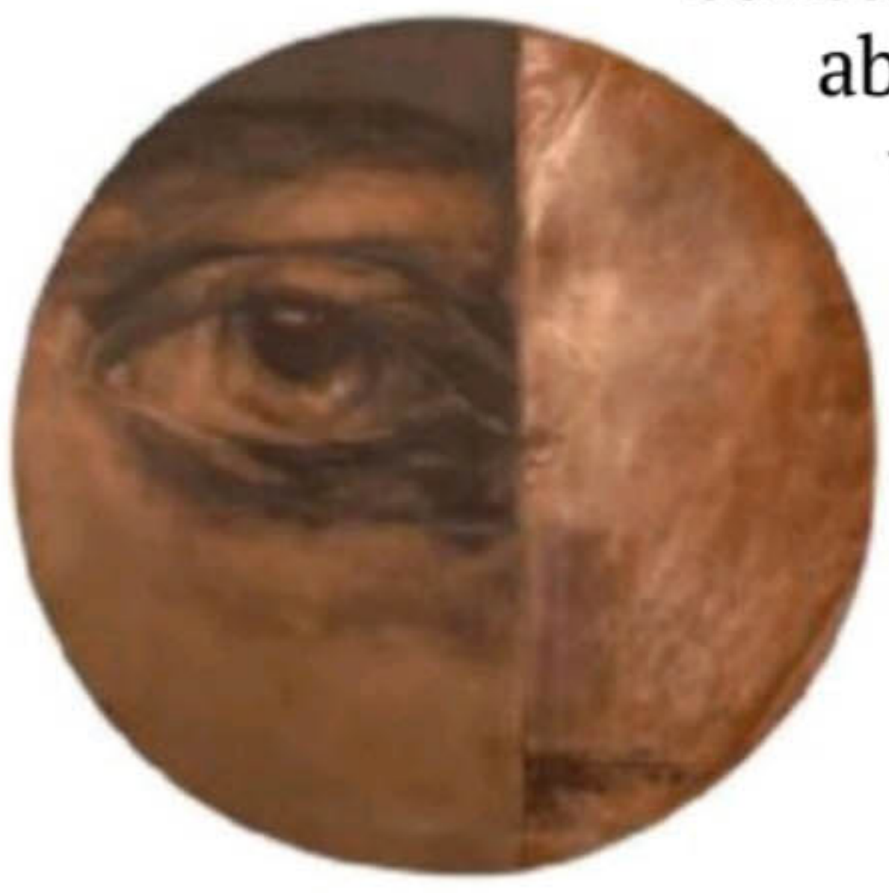
A Homecoming Through Art

Mumbai – After nearly two decades away from the solo exhibition space, artist Laila Khan Furniturewalla is back with *Untamed Heart,* on display at Gallery Art & Soul from April 16 to 22, 2025. The exhibition, rich in emotional depth and symbolic narrative, features a new body of work that explores spirituality, personal identity, and transformation. Her mixed-media artworks incorporate natural and traditional materials—sand, copper, pigment, and gold leaf—layered into textured, abstract compositions. A recurring presence of Lord Ganesh lends the collection a spiritual centre.

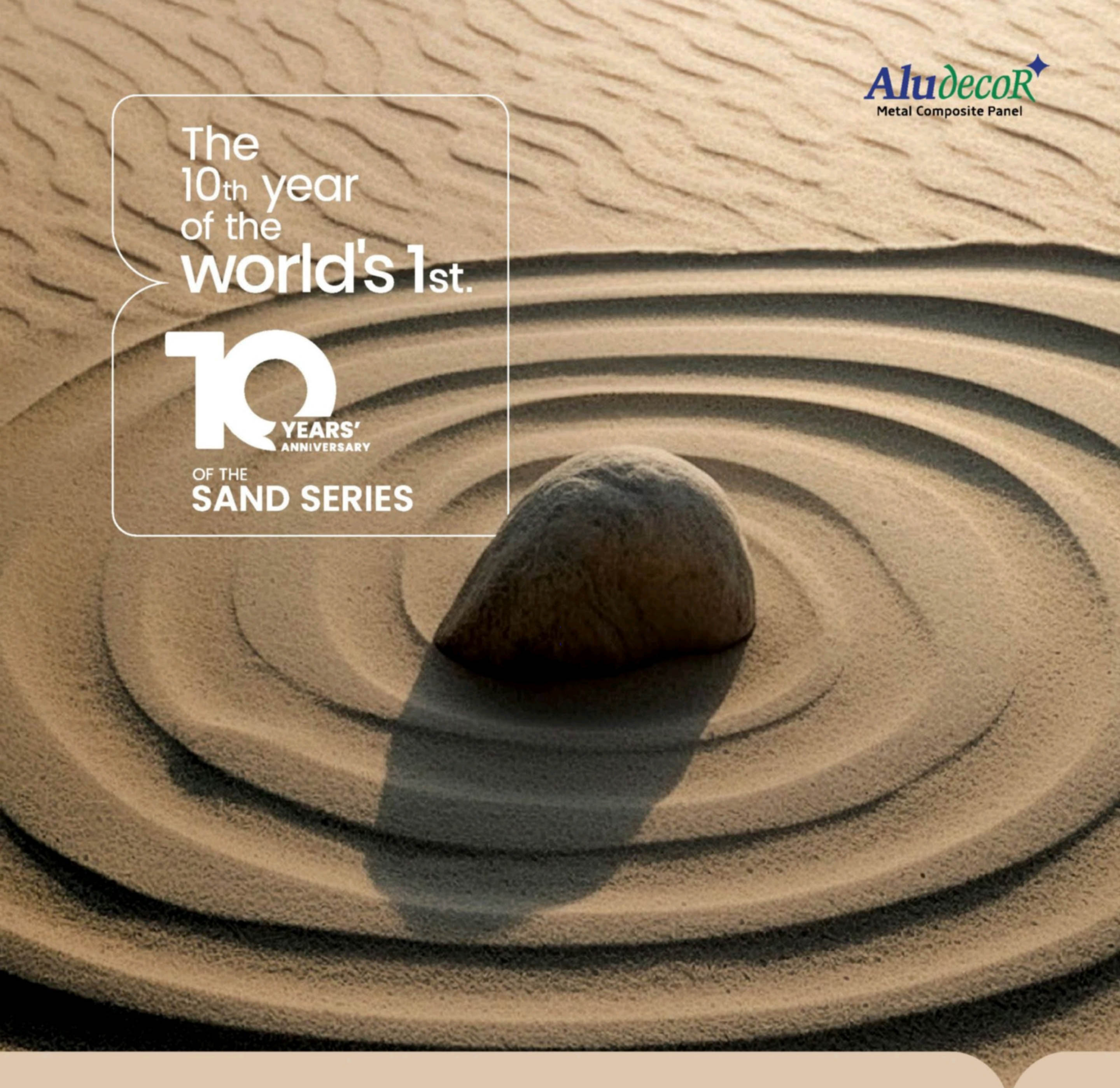
Untamed Heart follows a private preview at Snowball Studios on April 4 and is accompanied by reflections from art critic Uma Nair, who has closely followed Laila's career since 2007. This show marks a significant chapter in Furniturewalla's artistic journey, underscoring her unique voice in contemporary Indian art and her ability to fuse materiality with mysticism.

Artist Laila Khan Furniturewalla





PALETTE CHECK
Gold leaf, pigment, sand, and copper!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DESIGN COLLABS AND STATEMENT DROPS

A Sculptural Light That Doubles as a Seat

New Delhi – IDS by Innovative Design Studio has launched JAN, a multifunctional lighting piece by Italian lighting house Martinelli Luce, designed by Studio Natural. Making its India debut exclusively at IDS's flagship in Okhla, New Delhi, JAN is both an ambient lamp and a contemporary seat, crafted from recycled Carrara marble grit and grey cement. These sustainable materials give the piece a stone-like presence and a robust form factor suitable for both indoor and outdoor use.

The lamp's bold semicircular profile is enhanced by an integrated 9W high-efficiency LED that emits 900 lumens of 3000K warm light. Its dimmable function is controlled by a sleek touch interface, allowing users to adjust brightness with intuitive gestures. JAN is available in White, Black, and a range of neutral tones. Positioned as a design-forward alternative to traditional floor lamps or patio seats, the JAN launch underscores IDS's commitment to bringing global lighting icons to Indian audiences.

DESIGN FLEX
Part sculpture, part seat, part light—JAN doesn't do single roles.

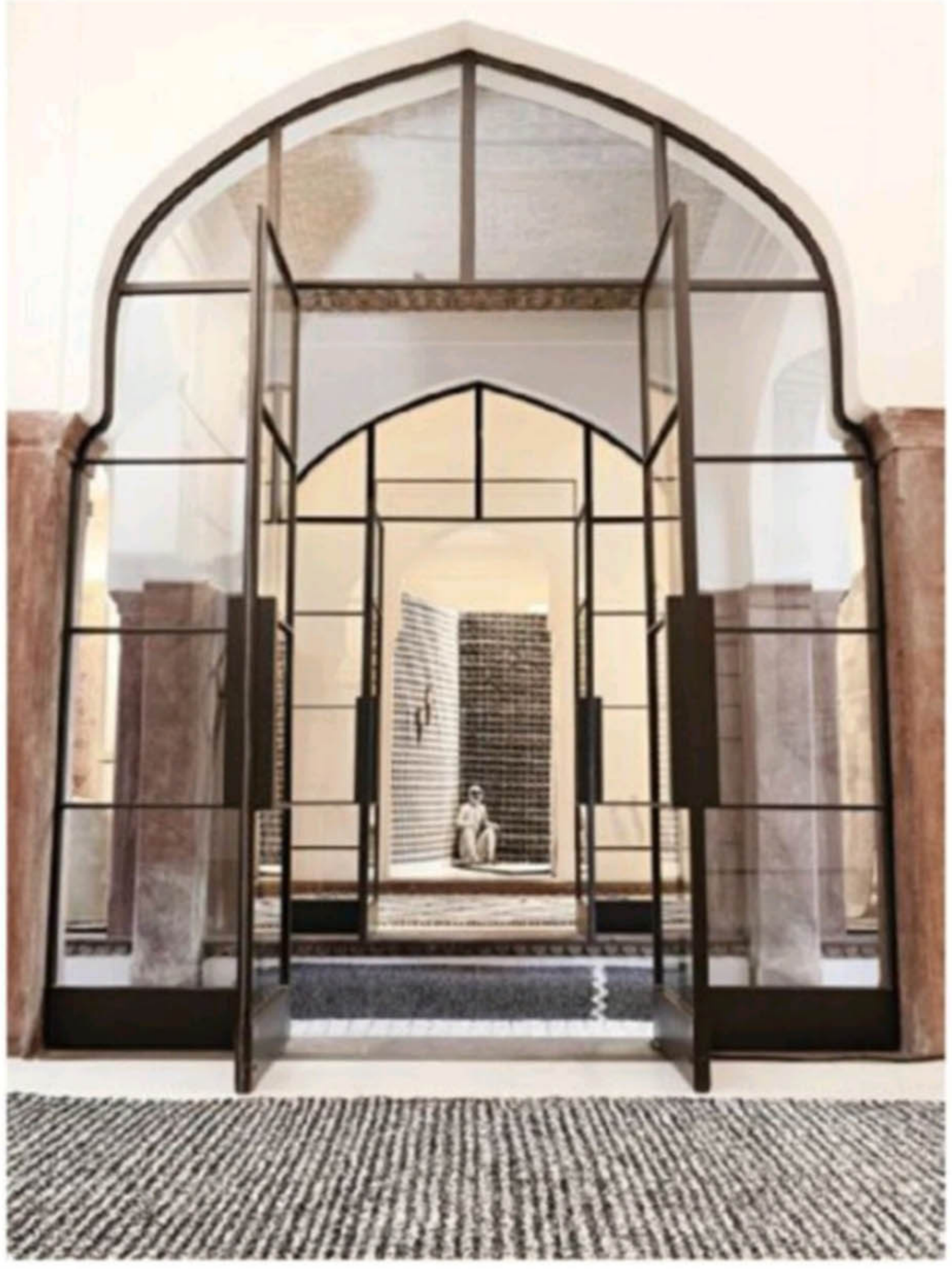
Amrai Is Rewriting the Craft Story— One Sculptural Object at a Time

New Delhi – Let's face it—"craft revival" has become one of design's most overused buzzwords. But Amrai, a new design-forward platform co-founded by Gunjan Gupta (of Ikkis fame) and stylist-turned-decorator Samir Wadekar, cuts through the noise. Their debut Kutch Collection turns the spotlight on India's potters and metalworkers—not as passive craftsmen executing someone else's brief, but as co-creators of form, material, and meaning. These are slow-made, sculptural objects that channel the wild geometry of canyon rocks, the sun-baked texture of terracotta kitchens, and the braided intimacy of regional rituals.

Each of the six pieces—from the three-legged Tripod that nods to chulah stoves, to the raku-glazed Nest inspired by Khari Nadi's rugged terrains—tells a story of land, labour, and lineage. There's copper bell detailing, hand-beaten metalwork, even white clay dug from riverbanks. And yet, the vibe isn't folky—it's fierce.

Photos Credit: Ashish Sahi

***The Gilded Age* by Peter D'Ascoli**



***Atelier Collection* by VIMAR 1991**

Jaipur Rugs at Salone 2025

Milano – At this year's Salone del Mobile, Jaipur Rugs unveiled *Playing with Tradition*—a bold and unexpected showcase that disrupted the usual tropes of craft and cultural storytelling. Leading the charge was a headline collaboration with Dutch designer Richard Hutten, whose irreverent approach translated into rugs that were anything but conventional: think Holi-hued palettes, surreal banana motifs, and sculptural 3D textures that reimagined the language of Indian artisanal design. But Hutten's wasn't the only voice in the mix. Jaipur Rugs also introduced new collections by Tatiana de Nicolay, whose *Jardins du Monde* brought a whisper of European garden romanticism into the weave, and Peter D'Ascoli's *Gilded Age*, which cleverly reframed vintage chintz and paisleys in modern compositions. The final offering—*Atelier Collection* by VIMAR 1991, the Chanel-linked Italian textile house—presented a study in minimalism, with rich monochromes that felt more haute couture than floor covering. "Our presence at Salone is more than a showcase," said Director Rutvi Chaudhary. "It's a cross-cultural conversation—a way of honouring tradition while inviting the world to see it anew." And rightly, so. Rather than chasing visual cohesion, the presentation was bound by intent: a willingness to stretch tradition without severing its roots. Each rug, hand-knotted in India, reflected the quiet precision of the craftswomen behind them—reminding us that even the most experimental forms begin with the human hand.

© Rodrigo Rize for Invisible Collection

***Jardins du Monde* by Paris-based Tatiana de Nicolay**

IKEA STOCKHOLM 2025 Arrives in India

India – IKEA has rolled out the STOCKHOLM 2025 collection across its Indian retail network, making 57 of the 100 global pieces available to local consumers. The collection, which debuted at Salone del Mobile 2025, showcases IKEA's most premium design ethos to date, balancing Scandinavian minimalism with craftsmanship. Key materials include hand-blown glass, wool, oak wood, and bouclé fabric. Highlights include, ALHAMN sectional sofa in deep turquoise, Djurmo bouclé armchair with flared oak legs, Multi-textile table lamp with earth-toned cylinders and Pendant lamp with 54 mouth-blown glass domes. The pieces are inspired by the rhythm of Swedish landscapes and are designed to function as everyday collectibles—affordable objects with emotional longevity.

BIG QUESTION
Will this mark IKEA's strongest design-forward push in India yet?

EXPERIENCE-LED LAUNCHES & INFRA MOVES

India's Newest Auto Design Playground by Mahindra

Mumbai – Bigger, bolder, and buzzing with energy—Mahindra's revamped India Design Studio (MIDS) has doubled its square footage and tripled its ambition. Tucked inside Mumbai's creative tech district, the newly inaugurated space is a hyper-functional workshop-meets-laboratory where Auto, Farm, and Mobility design teams get to think in clay and code.

The enhanced facility serves as a central link between India and Mahindra's European design arm, Mahindra Advanced Design Europe (MADE), enabling real-time design collaboration and global concept development. "We now have the capability to deliver projects from sketch to production in-house," said Ajay Saran Sharma, Head of MIDS. Pratap Bose, Chief Design and Creative Officer, described it as "India's most advanced automotive design centre."

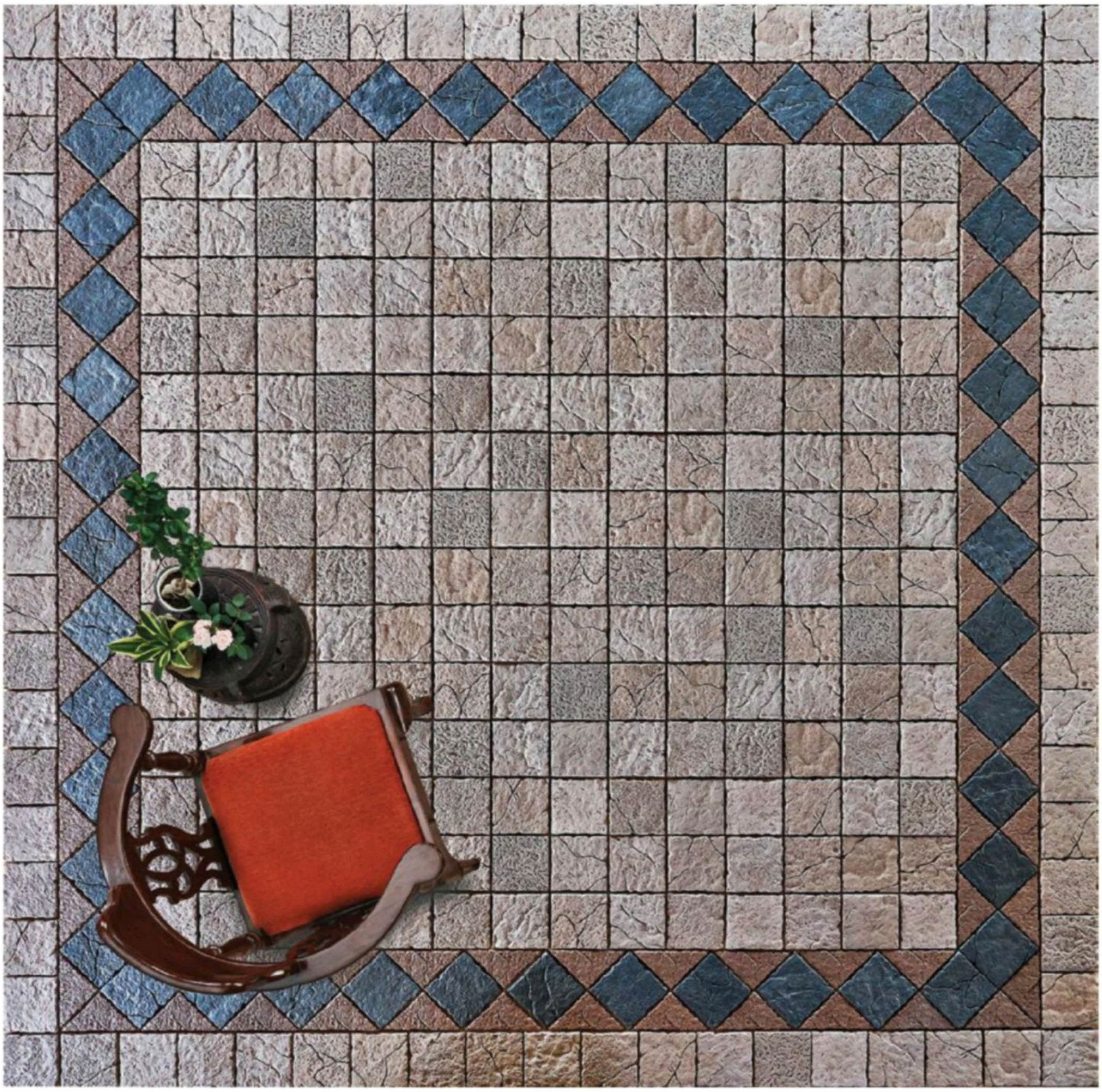
Artist's Library
Working Room

A+D LOVES
Playful paint names—*Coconut Cream, Wild Fern,* and *Mango Mood* bring the fun back to colour selection.

Birla Opus Paint Studio Opens in Gurugram: Paint, But Make It Experiential

Gurugram – This isn't your average paint shop. It's a colour lover's haven. Birla Opus' flagship store mixes 170+ finishes with VR simulation tech and architect-friendly zones. Launched under Grasim Industries and the Aditya Birla Group, Birla Opus Paints has opened its first Company Owned and Operated Paint Studio in Sector 29, Gurugram. Spanning 3,500 Sq ft, the space is designed to serve as an experience-first paint and décor destination. Offering over 170 products, including exclusive finishes, colour palettes, and wallcoverings, the studio enables customers to explore products hands-on and visualise outcomes using digital colour simulators. A specialised Paint Craft service offers turnkey solutions for residential and commercial clients. The centre includes a dedicated workspace for architects and interior designers, equipped with resource materials, sample libraries, and product advisors. Birla Opus plans to expand its studio presence across Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and other metros within the next 12 months, targeting the position of India's second-largest decorative paint brand.

TERRABLEND BY DISHA: WHERE TEXTURE MEETS TIMELESS ELEGANCE



On the world of outdoor design, where functionality must dance with beauty, Terrablend by Disha Ecoloc Pavers is a true standout. With 16 unique textures—more than any other paver in its class—Terrablend brings an artisan's touch to modern paving.

Available in captivating shades like Copper Leaf, Valley Flower, and Midnight, Terrablend effortlessly blends style with strength. Its versatile 200 x 200 mm format makes it a seamless choice for hotel lobbies, garden lounges, farmhouses, and upscale residences. It's especially suited for extended play areas connected to gardens, where charm and practicality go hand in hand.

Its signature edgers in Copper Leaf, Grey, and Midnight offer a beautifully framed finish—refining outdoor spaces with a designer's finesse. Whether it's a luxury resort entrance or a tranquil backyard path, Terrablend infuses every setting with timeless sophistication.

Disha's commitment to quality goes far beyond design. Certified by CSIR and CBRI, Disha Pavers are backed by scientific credibility and exceptional durability. A special eco-shield coating adds abrasion resistance while locking in colour brilliance—ensuring that every paver looks as stunning years from now as it does on day one.

Crafted with sustainability in mind, Disha Ecoloc Pavers are as kind to the environment as they are inspiring to the eye. Choose Disha to enhance your outdoor aesthetics while making a responsible, long-lasting investment.

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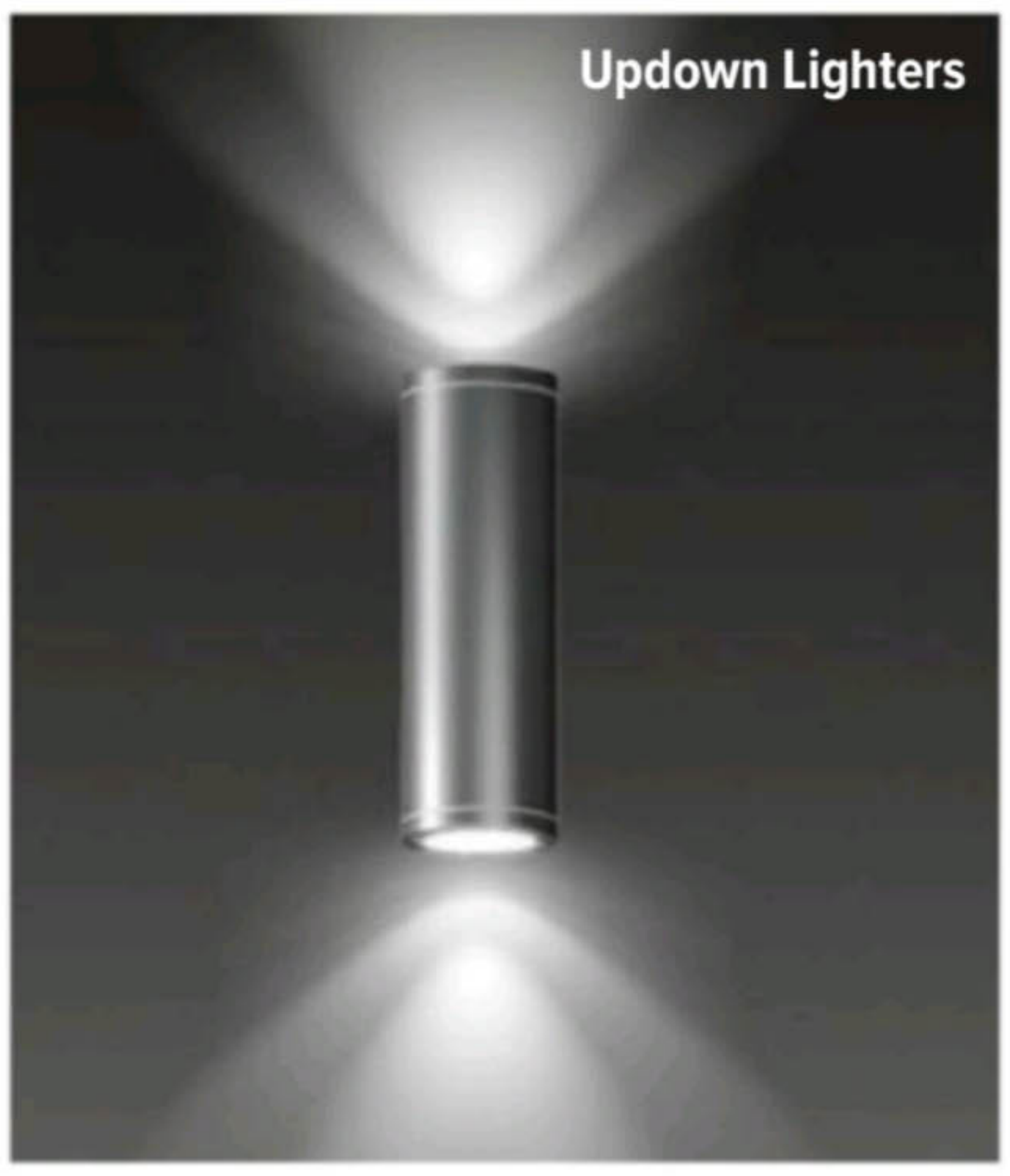
Updown Lighters

ILLUMINATING LANDSCAPES: K-LITE'S HIGH-QUALITY ARCHITECTURAL LUMINAIRES

Established in 1977, K-lite is renowned for its extensive range of high-quality architectural luminaires and poles that cater to diverse applications and design preferences.

Since its inception, K-lite through it manufacturing units in focusses on the production of sustainable and efficient LED luminaires. K-lite's products meet stringent quality standards while embodying elegant aesthetics.

K-lite's landscape products are designed to withstand various environmental challenges such as wind, water, direct sunlight, rain, and dust. Each outdoor luminaire boasts high IP (ingress protection) and IK ratings, ensuring robustness and durability suitable for outdoor and landscape applications.

The Range offered by K-lite is comprehensive and versatile. It includes Linear Wall Washers, Up-Down Lighters, LED Strips/Neon Flex, Promenade Lighting, Bollards, Underwater Lighting, Post Top Luminaires, Bulkheads, Pathfinders, IP67 Linear Profiles, Polar Lighting, and a newly introduced series of Facade Lighting.

K-lite's commitment to innovation and quality, shines through in every product, blending functional efficiency with aesthetic appeal. Each luminaire in the landscape range is meticulously crafted to enhance outdoor spaces, offering not only illumination but also enhancing the visual appeal of architectural environments. Whether illuminating pathways, accentuating building facades, or creating ambiance in public spaces, K-lite's luminaires deliver reliability and elegance, making them the preferred choice for architects, landscape designers, and developers aiming to transform outdoor spaces with lighting solutions that integrates form and function seamlessly.

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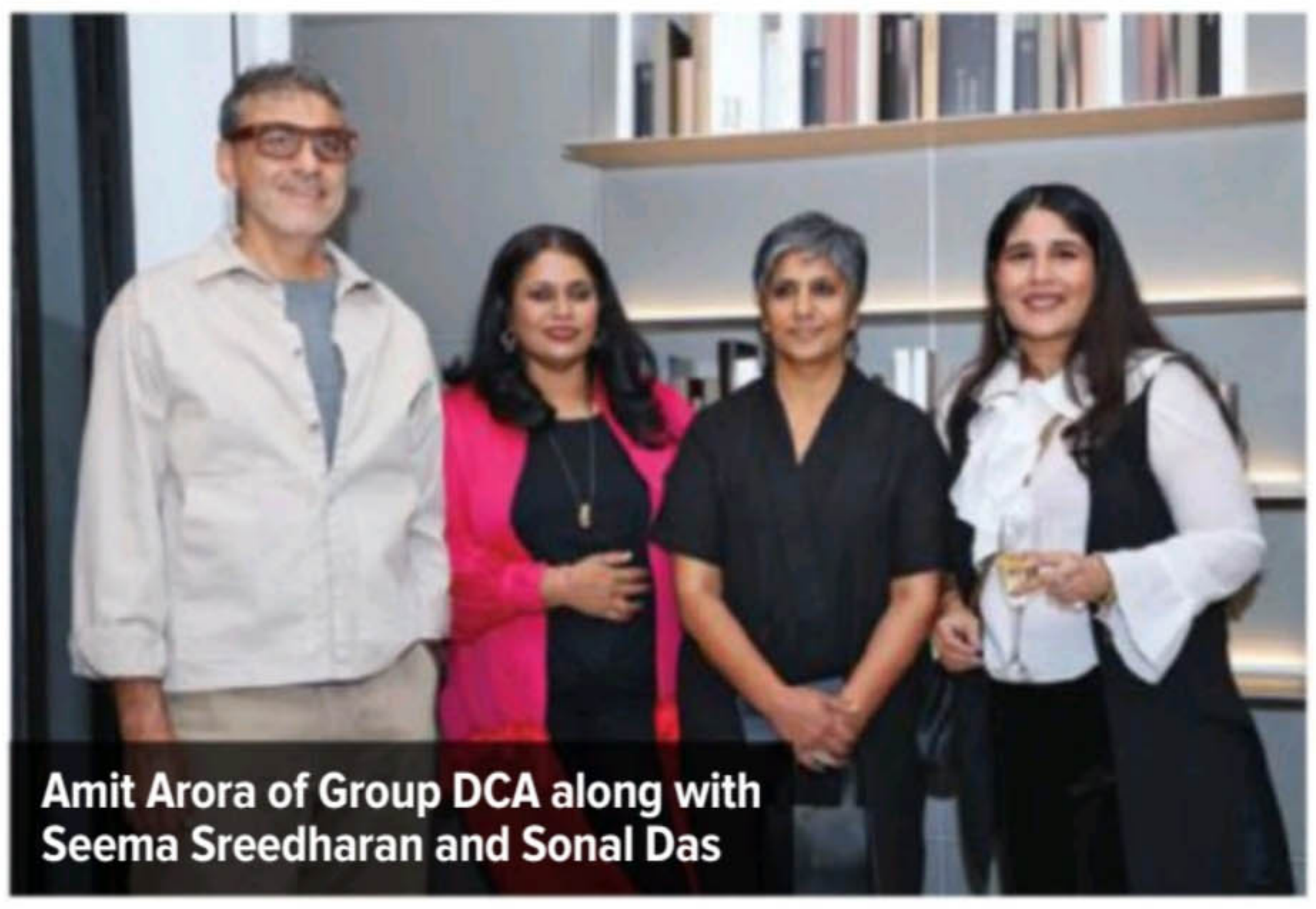
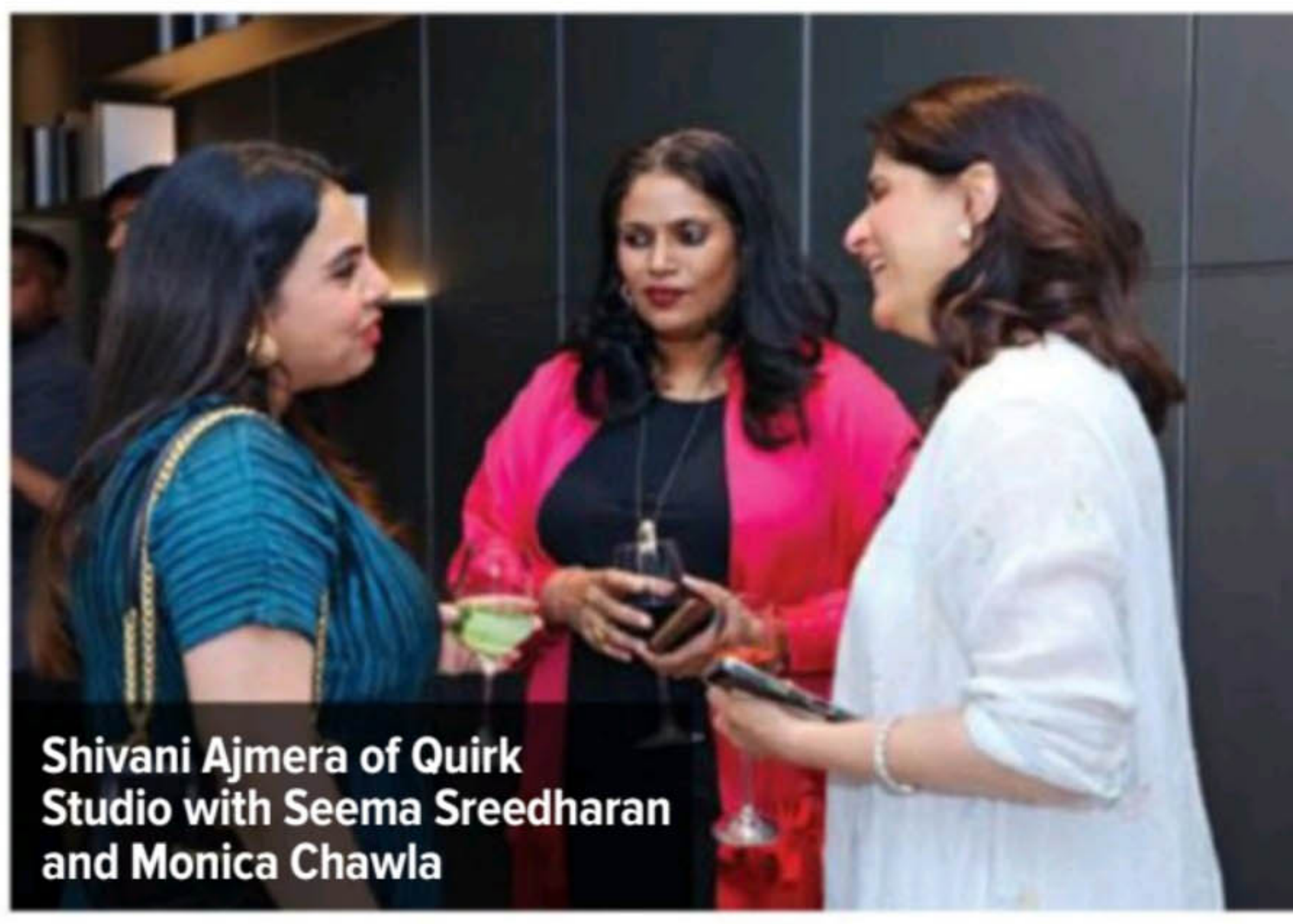
Hardesh Chawla in conversation with Vivek Gupta



Amit Arora of Group DCA along with Seema Sreedharan and Sonal Das



Shivani Ajmera of Quirk Studio with Seema Sreedharan and Monica Chawla

AN EVENING OF DESIGN, INNOVATION, AND COLLABORATION

Essentia Home makes a grand launch in Delhi with an exclusive design event, unveiling its latest flagship store and India's largest Rimadesio showcase

By Ankita Rathod

Essentia Home's journey in redefining luxury interiors took a bold new step as it opened its flagship store in Delhi's Design District on MG Road. Following the success of its Gurugram store, the brand celebrated this milestone with an exclusive evening on March 21, hosted in collaboration with Architecture + Design magazine. The event brought together over 100 of the country's top architects and design leaders, transforming the launch into a night of immersive experiences, inspiring conversations, and a showcase of global design excellence.

The five-level, 20,000 sq. ft. flagship store unfolded like a meticulously curated exhibition, where each space embodied a seamless blend of global sophistication and Indian craftsmanship. As industry stalwarts explored the collections, it became evident that Essentia Home had created more than just a store—it had set the stage for an evolution in luxury interiors.

Founded by Hardesh and Monica Chawla, the visionary duo behind Essentia Environments, the brand's expansion into Delhi marks a new chapter in their 25-year legacy of refined design. Hridik Chawla, spearheading the Essentia Home Experience Center, welcomed

Sushant Verma with his team along with Sonal Das (Director - Editorial & Brand Solutions, A+D)

Sanjyt Syngh, Sonal Das (Director - Editorial & Brand Solutions, A+D), Seema Sreedharan (Editor, A+D) with Monica Chawla

Lijo Reny Architects

Monica Chawla, Hridik Chawla and Aparna Kaushik

essentia home
Rimadesio

From left to right: Dilsher Sandhu, Simran Boparai, Nalini Aurora, Deep Gupta

guests into this immersive world, offering a curated walkthrough of the collections, where furniture, technology, and craftsmanship coalesced effortlessly. Sculptural statement pieces, handcrafted soft furnishings, state-of-the-art kitchens, luxury vanities, and an exclusive selection of Rimadesio panellings, wardrobes, and architectural systems transformed the showroom into a dynamic expression of contemporary living.

One of the evening's most anticipated moments was the grand unveiling of Rimadesio's exclusive showcase—the largest in India—spanning the entire ground floor of the store. The Italian brand, celebrated for its precision-engineered wardrobes, sliding doors, and architectural systems, found its perfect synergy within the Essentia Home experience. "Rimadesio's precision, muted aesthetics, and superior craftsmanship perfectly align with our design ethos. Bringing this brand to North India in an immersive way is a milestone for Essentia Home," said Hardesh Chawla, reflecting on the brand's strategic collaboration.

Beyond unveiling new collections, the evening was a celebration of design's global language. Guests engaged with Essentia Home's curated collaborations with some of the world's most renowned designers, including Sara Sbolgi & Marco Ferriani from Florence, Vincent Mazenauer from Switzerland, Ahmad Bazazo from Beirut, Luis Gimeno from Barcelona, Maison Toukkani from Switzerland, Tomaya Studio from Tel Aviv, Anna Ignatenko from Moscow, and Anda_ba, an India-London-based design studio. From sculptural dining tables crafted from Indian-origin stone to avant-garde furniture and decor, the event was a testament to Essentia Home's commitment to pushing creative boundaries.

As guests navigated through the store, each space unfolded like a sensory narrative. The sculptural living and dining areas, automated bedrooms, designer kitchens, and outdoor sanctuaries transported visitors into a world where art, technology, and craftsmanship coexisted in perfect harmony. Signature Essentia fragrances filled the air, accentuating the immersive experience with a touch of olfactory luxury.

"Essentia Home is not just about furniture—it's about an entire lifestyle experience. With our expansive collections spanning furniture, soft furnishings, fragrances, and decor, we aim to make high design and impeccable craftsmanship more accessible to discerning clients," said Hridik Chawla, encapsulating the brand's philosophy.

With this landmark event, Essentia Home has cemented its position as a leader in contemporary luxury interiors. The collaboration with Architecture+Design magazine brought together some of the brightest minds in the industry, fostering dialogue, inspiration, and a glimpse into the future of interior design in India. For architects, designers, and design aficionados, the new flagship store is more than just a destination—it is a living, breathing showcase of global sensibilities and Indian craftsmanship, seamlessly intertwined. .

GAURAV AGGARWAL, CHAIRMAN - STONEX GROUP

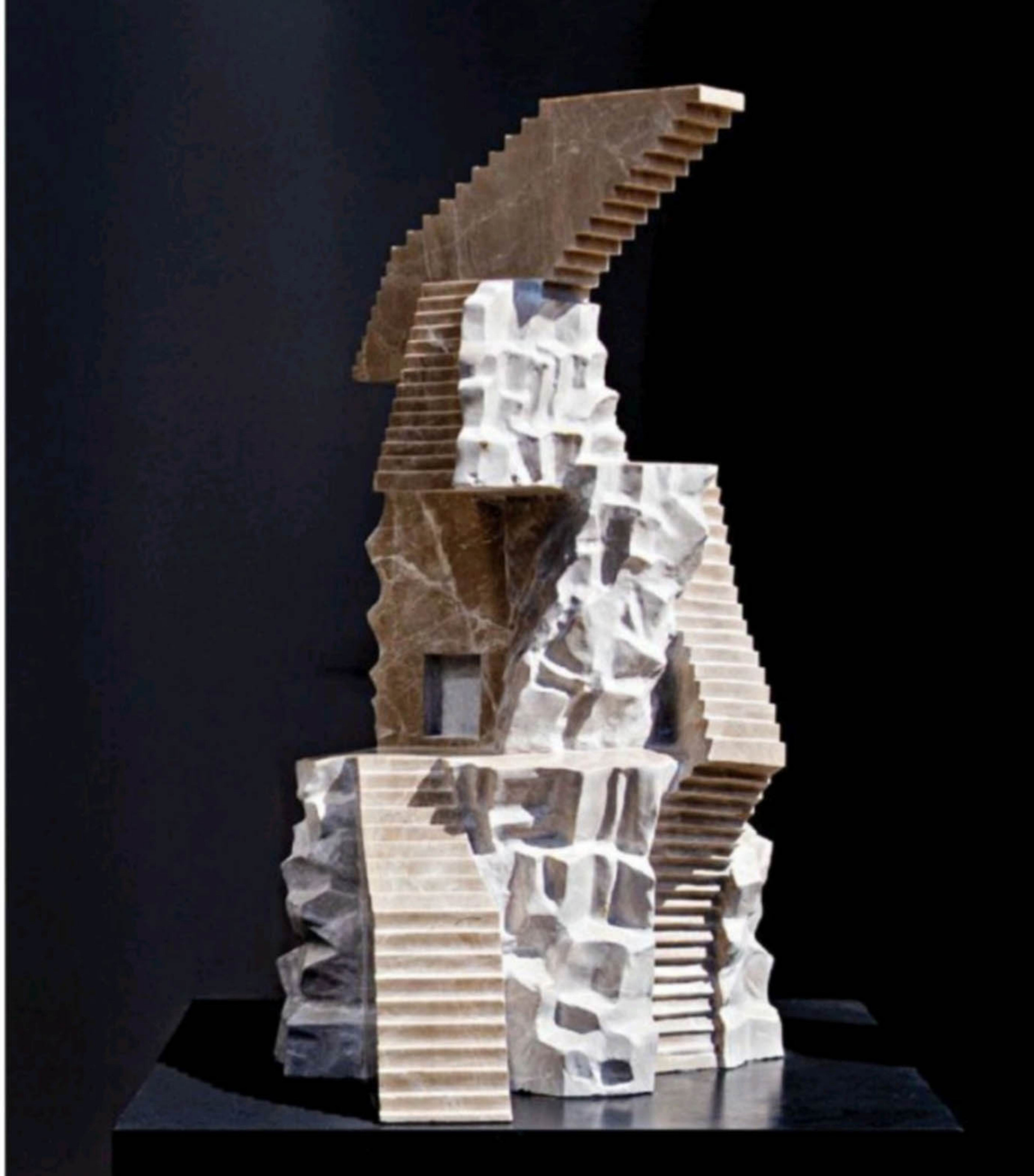
ROCK STAR OF ART

Beyond the boardroom, the Chairman of StoneX Group reveals a deep, personal love for marble—a passion that's elevating Indian craftsmanship onto the global stage

By Kashish Kaushal

Gaurav Aggarwal, Chairman - StoneX Group

There's a moment, if you manage to catch Gaurav Aggarwal in a candid set up, where the polished exterior of the Chairman of StoneX Group melts away, and you see the kid who once trailed his brother Saurav through the sun-scorched marble quarries of Rajasthan. His hands, now steady with the confidence of a man who's built an empire, still yearn to touch the cool, veined surface of a slab, to feel the stories locked inside—stories of centuries, of hands that shaped it before his time. It's not just stone to him; it's a heartbeat, a vibration that has been buzzing in his chest since those teenage days when the dust of his uncles' mines clung to his clothes and sparked a quiet, unshakable love. Meeting him, you feel it; this isn't a businessman spinning profit from rock—it's a dreamer, a creator, whose voice softens with reverence when he calls marble 'Mother Nature's medium.'



Gigi Scaria: His work in marble from Cappadocia calls to mind that Turkish region's bizarre landscapes and homes carved into rock. The steps at first seem like a stairway to heaven, but it soon becomes clear the path is impossible for any person to traverse

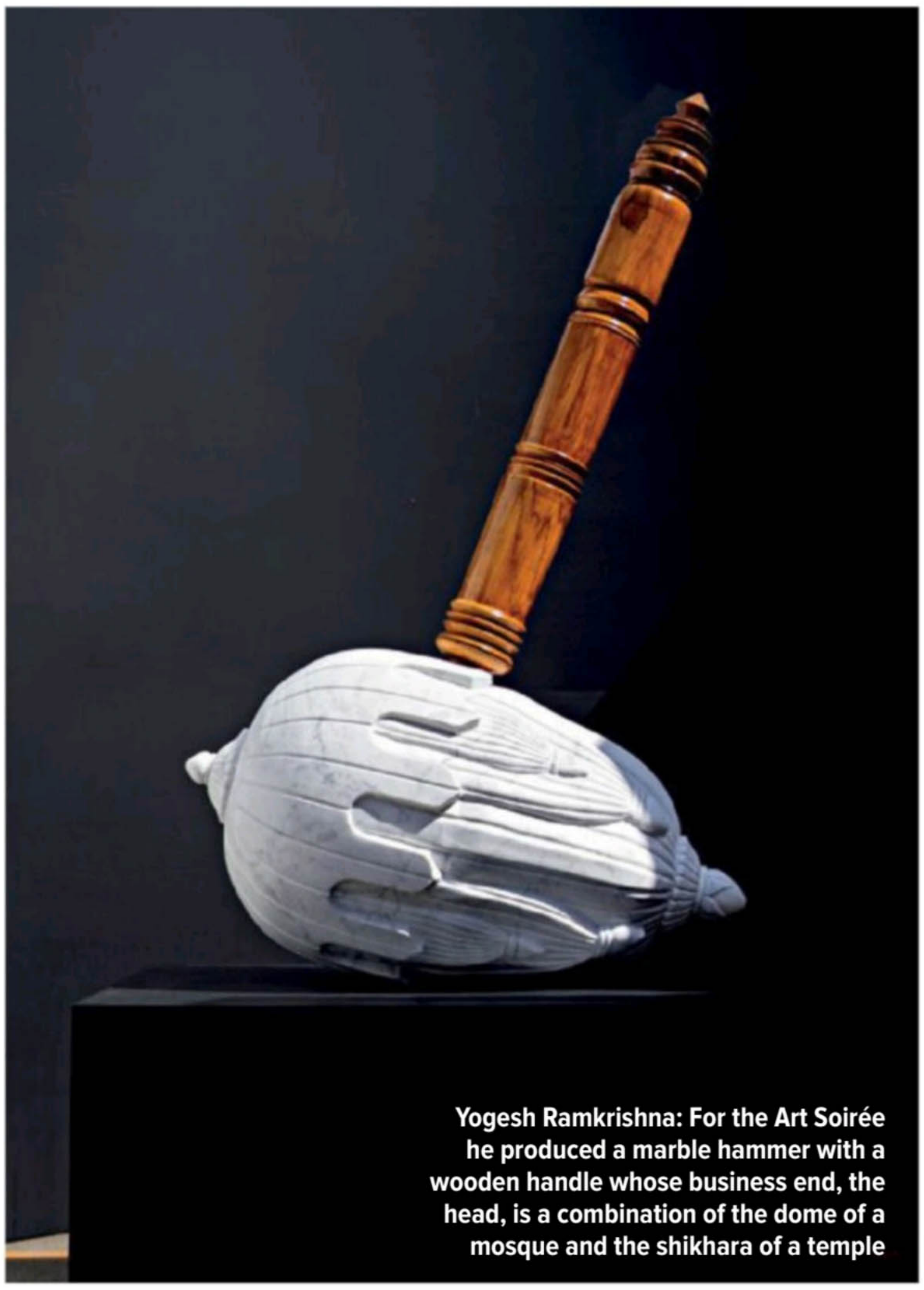
That love found its expression in the StoneX Art Soirée 2025, a three-day long celebration in Kishangarh where Gaurav turned his passion into a living gallery of sculpture, design, and craftsmanship. After three years of crisscrossing the globe—meeting artists, gallerists, and curators—he brought together visionaries like India's Sudarshan Shetty, with his poignant marble umbrella, and Italy's Cynthia Sah, whose Apuan marble creations hum with classical echoes, alongside the UK's Peter Randall-Page and many others. Each artist reimagined stone as a vessel for ideas—timelessness, loss, harmony—breathing life into slabs from Macedonia, Turkey, and beyond.

Here, amid the hum of chisels and the glow of sculptures, Gaurav is not just showcasing marble's beauty—he's pouring his heart into a vision where Indian craftsmanship gets it due moment on the global stage, chasing a legacy etched not in ledgers, but in stone. In this tête-à-tête, he opens up about his roots and his extraordinary journey with stone. Keep an eye out for his infectious passion—it weaves through stories of ancient quarries, the thrill of the Art Soirée's creation, and his unwavering belief in marble's power to provoke and inspire.

Your journey with StoneX began in 2008, but what sparked your fascination with natural stone long before that? Was there a specific moment or experience that ignited this lifelong passion?
Undoubtedly and passionately, my love for natural stone has been a part of me long before co-founding StoneX.

It wasn't a single defining moment, but rather a gradual journey that developed over time since I was a teen. My brother, Saurav, and I started working in the marble business back in 2001, even before we had a brand name. The brand itself was established in 2003 under a partnership firm, and StoneX India Pvt. Ltd. was officially formed in 2007. Growing up in a business family, entrepreneurship was an intrinsic part of our upbringing.

> “The idea for the StoneX Art Soirée 2025 took shape after three years of extensive groundwork in the field of art. We travelled across the world, meeting gallerists, artists, and curators, and enhancing our knowledge along the way.”
>
> —GAURAV AGGARWAL



Yogesh Ramkrishna: For the Art Soirée he produced a marble hammer with a wooden handle whose business end, the head, is a combination of the dome of a mosque and the shikhara of a temple

This early exposure to marble came to us like a progression when we used to visit our maternal uncles in Rajasthan who were in marble mining business since then, my passion for stone and a desire to innovate within the industry started in those visits in quarries, naturally led to the founding of StoneX. It was a seamless progression—an opportunity to explore the endless possibilities within the stone industry, something my brothers and I have shared since our teenage years.

Growing up, did you find yourself drawn to the textures, forms, or stories embedded in natural materials like marble? How did those early encounters shape your creative vision?

Growing up, I was always drawn to the textures and forms of natural materials like marble. From a young age, I was exposed to the beauty and craftsmanship of stone, and marble captivated me—not just for its visual appeal but for the stories it held.

Its history, intricate designs, and ability to transform a space fascinated me. These early experiences shaped my creative vision by instilling a deep appreciation for the tactile qualities and timeless elegance of natural materials.

You’ve described natural stone as a "canvas for creativity" and a "link to history." What is it about marble, in particular, that resonates with you on such a deep, personal level?

Back in the day, when I first started the business, the Indian marble market was still unorganised, but I never saw marble as just a commodity. To me, it was always a canvas for creativity, Mother Nature’s medium for artistic expression. My connection to these materials goes beyond just appreciation—it’s deeply personal. The love for something like marble isn’t something you can learn from books or texts; it’s an innate feeling. It comes from within, something you simply "feel."

On a personal level, my respect for marble has always been part of who I am. It’s not just about the material itself, but the stories, history, and craftsmanship that are embedded in it.

Your travels to Italy and other stone-rich regions are well-documented. How have these experiences—walking through quarries or witnessing ancient stone carvings—influenced your appreciation for the material’s timelessness?

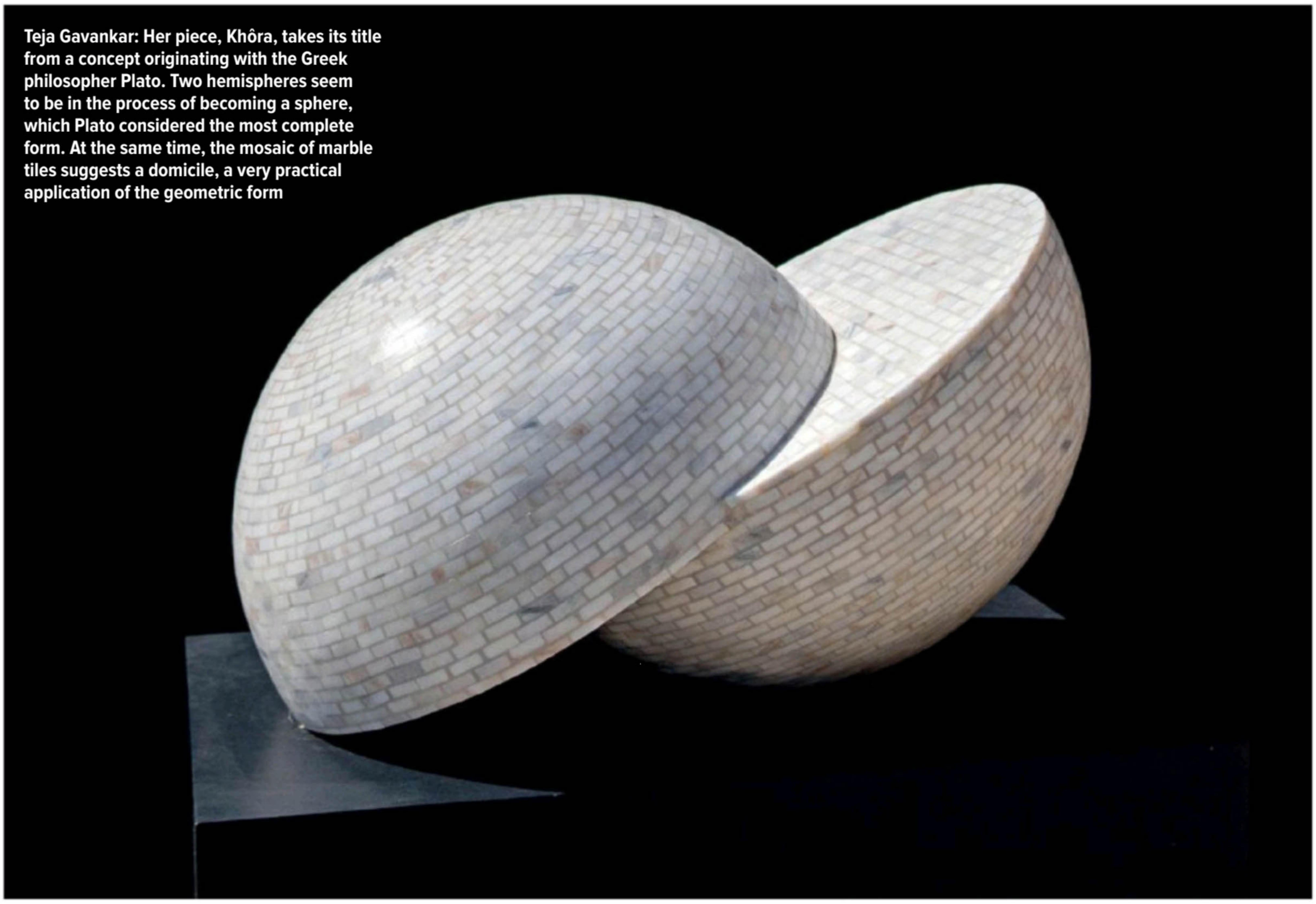
My travels to international quarries, particularly in Italy, have had a profound impact on my appreciation for the timelessness of marble. Walking through these quarries and witnessing ancient stone carvings firsthand opened my eyes to a whole new world of marble that I hadn’t fully understood before. It wasn’t just about the material itself, but the stories and traditions woven into it over centuries.

In Italy, I saw how marble has been used for centuries to create masterpieces, from the ancient Roman sculptures to the Renaissance works. This deepened my respect for the material’s enduring beauty and its ability to stand the test of time. These experiences, both personal and professional, have continuously fueled my passion for marble, enriching my creativity and shaping the way I approach design and innovation in the industry today.

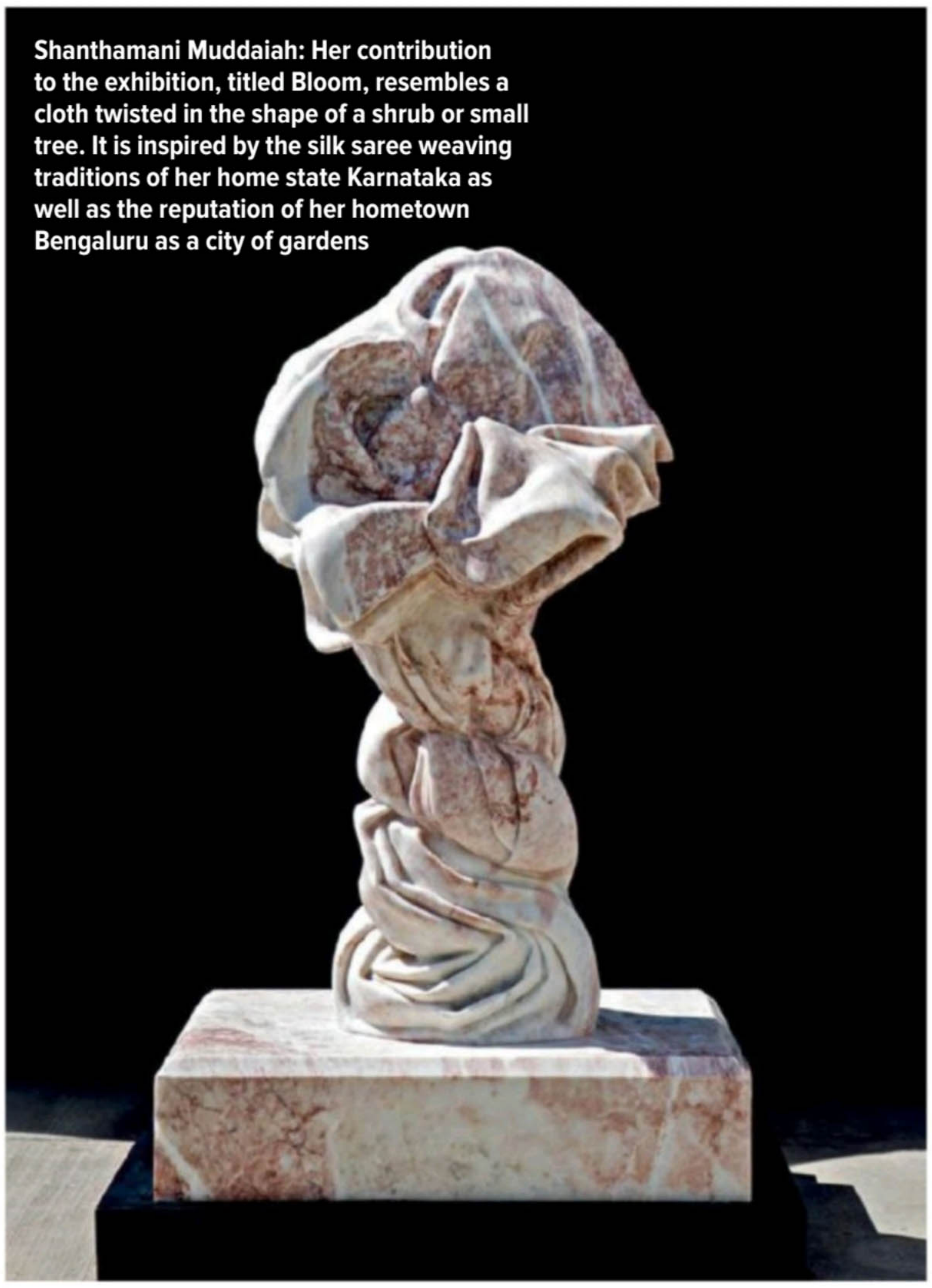
The timelessness of marble is not just in its physical durability but also in its ability to inspire across generations.

The StoneX Art Soirée 2025 was a celebration of sculpture, design, and craftsmanship. What inspired you to bring artists and stone together in this way, and how did the idea first take root in your mind? What was the most rewarding part of seeing that vision come to life?

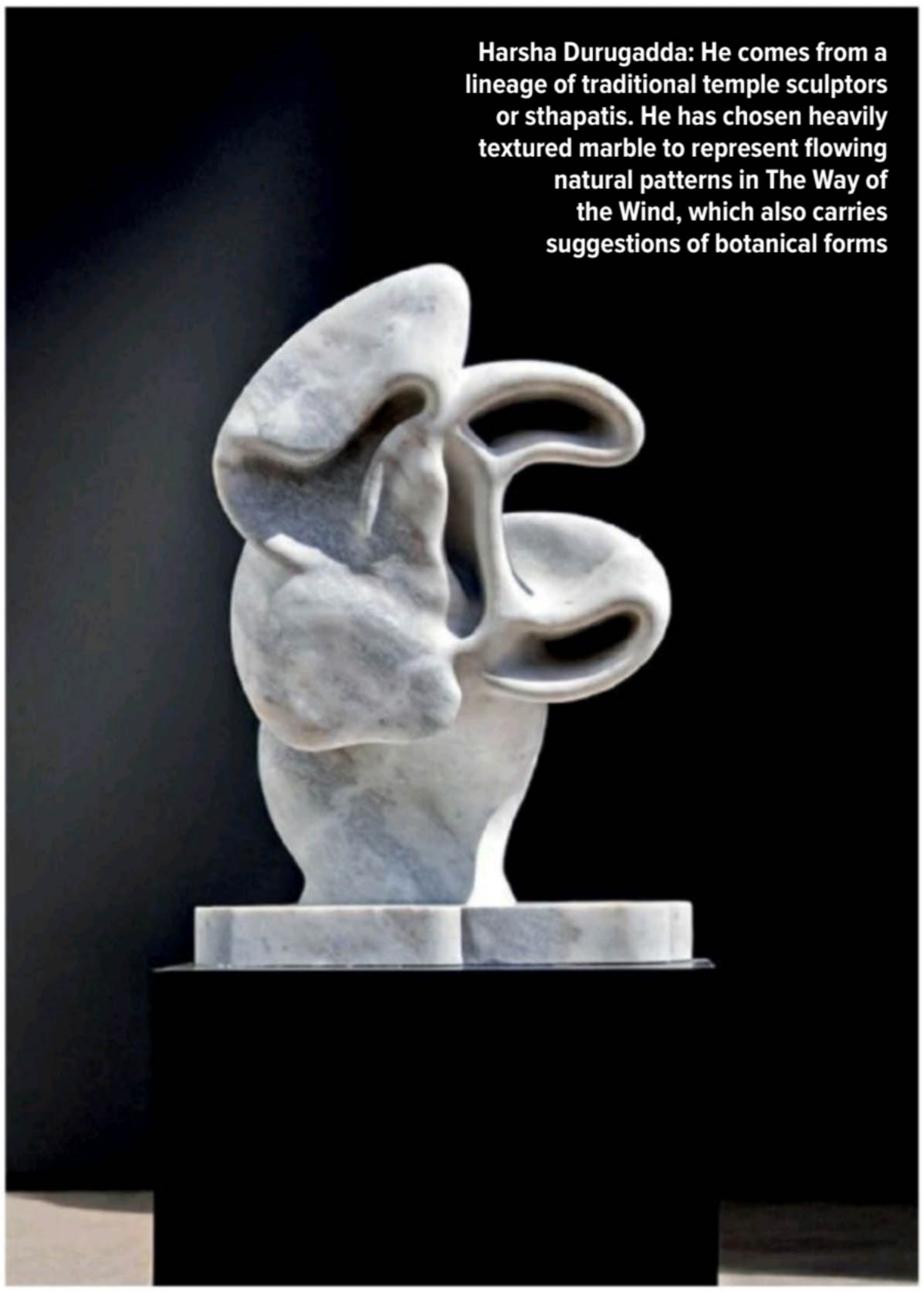
The idea for the StoneX Art Soirée 2025 took shape after three years of extensive groundwork in the field of art. We travelled across the world, meeting gallerists, artists, and curators, and enhancing our knowledge along the way. We were fortunate to have our artist friends from across the globe support us as we embarked on this new journey.



Teja Gavankar: Her piece, Khôra, takes its title from a concept originating with the Greek philosopher Plato. Two hemispheres seem to be in the process of becoming a sphere, which Plato considered the most complete form. At the same time, the mosaic of marble tiles suggests a domicile, a very practical application of the geometric form



Shanthamani Muddaiah: Her contribution to the exhibition, titled Bloom, resembles a cloth twisted in the shape of a shrub or small tree. It is inspired by the silk saree weaving traditions of her home state Karnataka as well as the reputation of her hometown Bengaluru as a city of gardens



Harsha Durugadda: He comes from a lineage of traditional temple sculptors or sthapatis. He has chosen heavily textured marble to represent flowing natural patterns in The Way of the Wind, which also carries suggestions of botanical forms

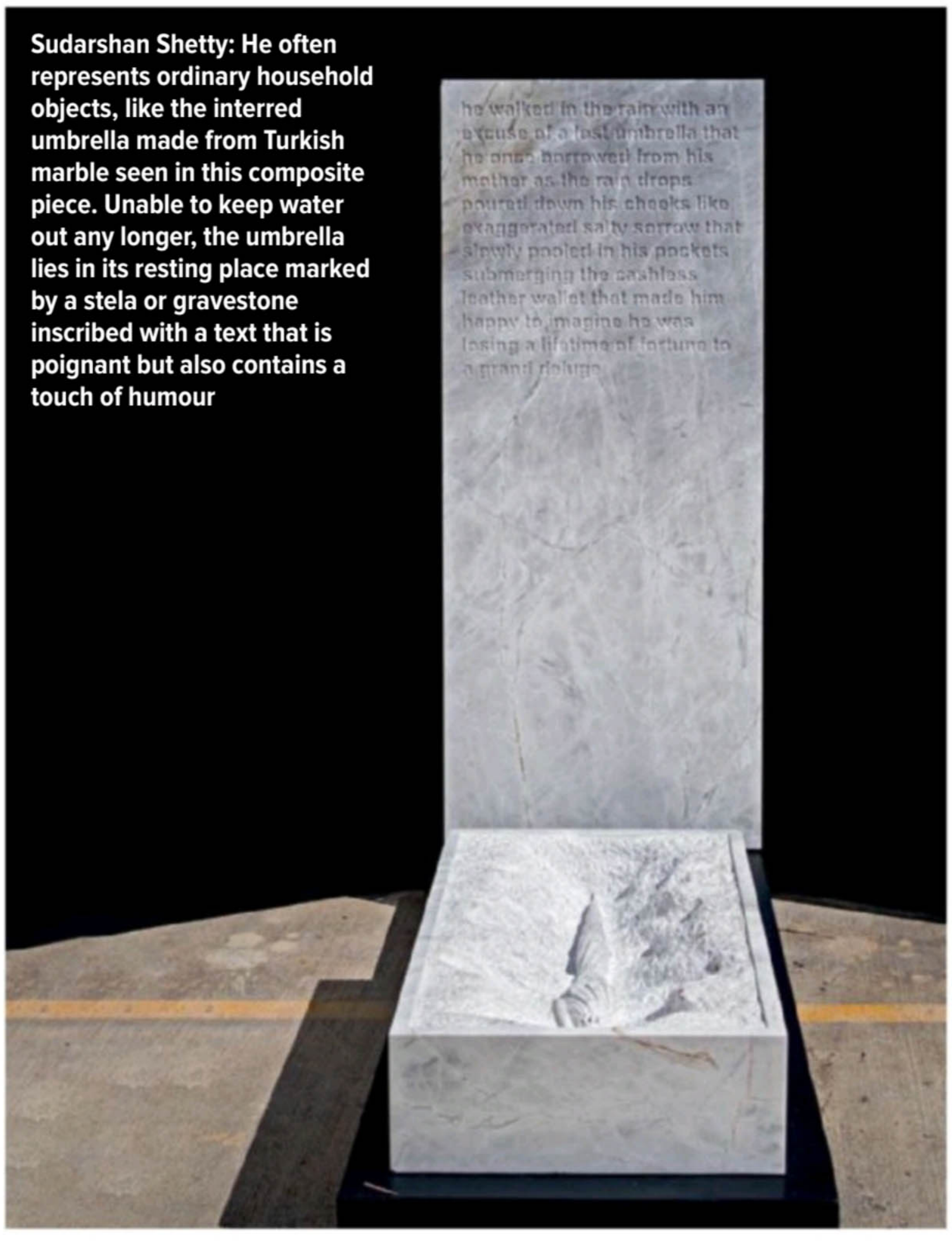
There is no better way to introduce marble as an art form than through the artists themselves. It felt like a perfect match to celebrate not just the material, but also the craftsmanship and creativity it inspires.

This event was our humble way of signalling to our industry friends that StoneX is ready for its next phase. Our artists shared their unique visions and narratives through this timeless medium, and it was truly inspiring to witness.

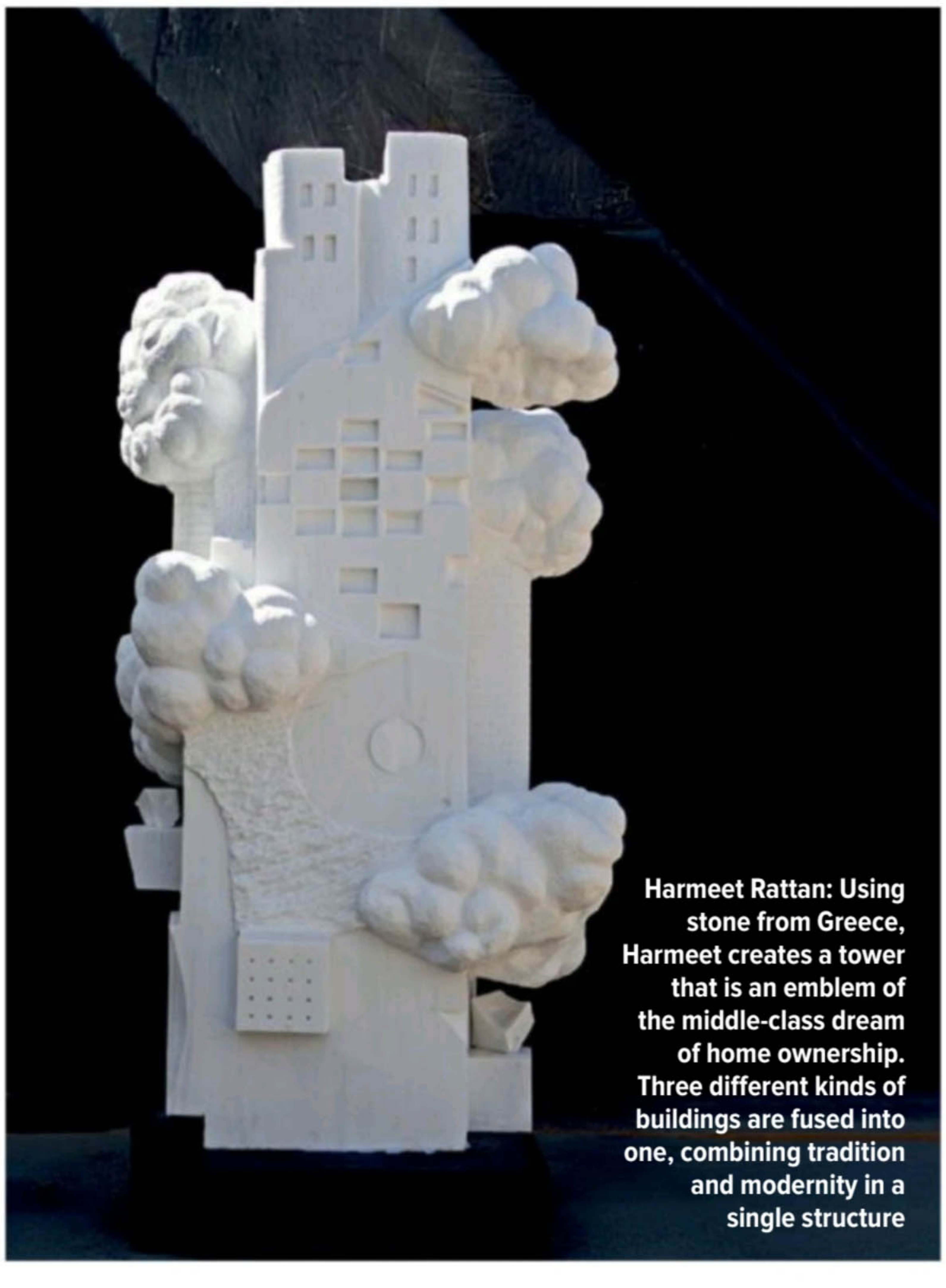
The most rewarding part of seeing this vision come to life was observing the powerful connection between the artists and the stone they worked with. Seeing their passion and creativity reflected in their pieces—and knowing that StoneX played a part in bringing these masterpieces to a wider audience—was incredibly fulfilling. The event felt like a true celebration of stone's timelessness and the endless possibilities it offers in the hands of talented artists.

You collaborated with both Indian and international artists like Sudarshan Shetty, Cynthia Sah, and Peter Randall-Page. What was it like witnessing these diverse creative minds reinterpret natural stone, and how did their perspectives shape your own?
Our collaboration with renowned artists such as Sudarshan Shetty, Cynthia Sah, and Peter Randall-Page has been a truly inspiring journey, built on mutual respect and creative exchange. We've been following their work closely for over a year, delving into their unique perspectives and interpretations of natural stone. Each artist brings a distinct vision—both defined and yet, in its own way, an evolving paradigm. While their interpretations of stone are individual, together they contribute to a deeper, more expansive understanding of the material.

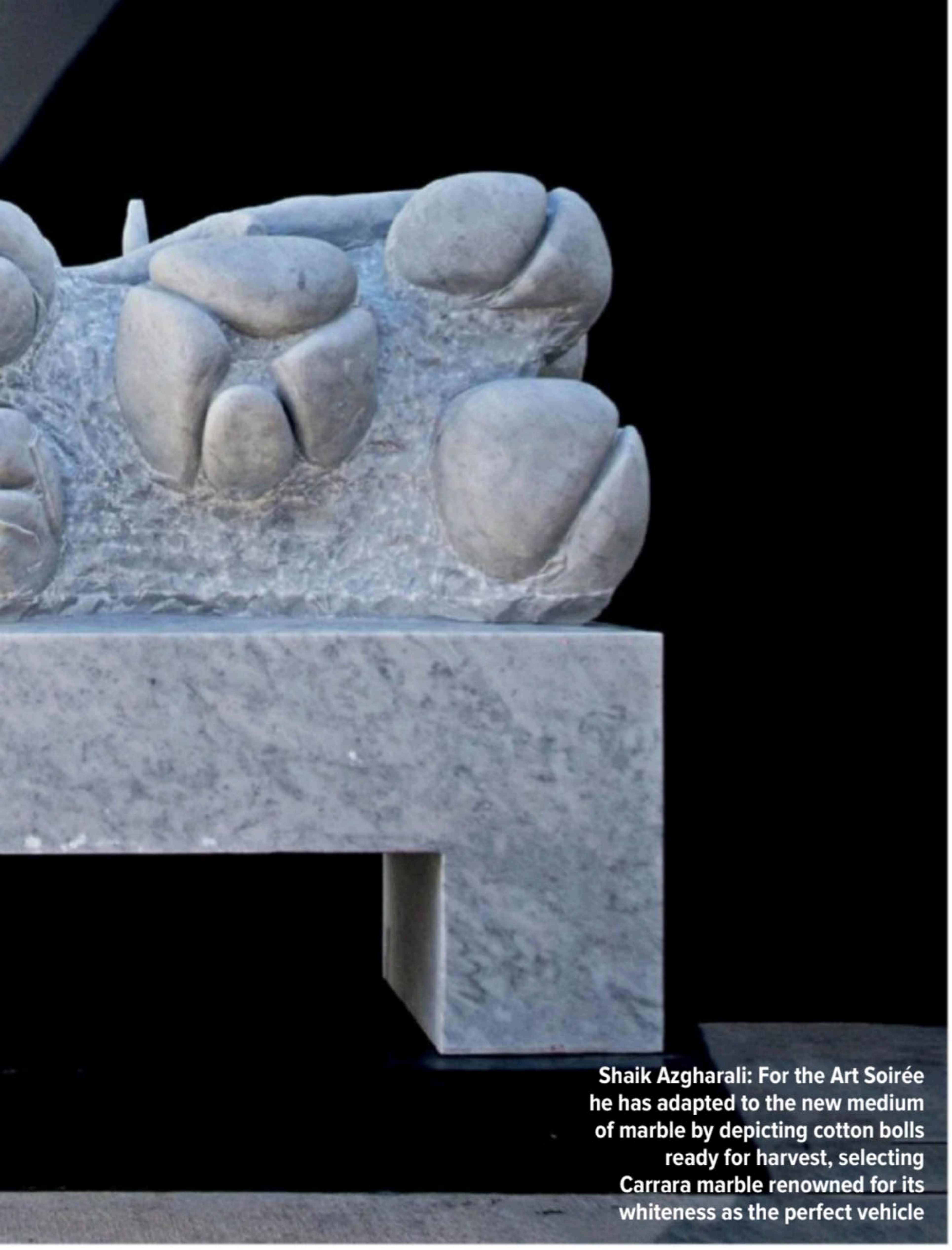
Through their eyes, I've come to see that each artist's work creates a cohesive and complete artistic narrative, all while preserving their


he walked in the rain with an excuse of a lost umbrella that he once borrowed from his mother as the rain drops poured down his cheeks like exaggerated salty sorrow that slowly pooled in his pockets submerging the cashless leather wallet that made him happy to imagine he was losing a lifetime of fortune to a grand deluge

Sudarshan Shetty: He often represents ordinary household objects, like the interred umbrella made from Turkish marble seen in this composite piece. Unable to keep water out any longer, the umbrella lies in its resting place marked by a stela or gravestone inscribed with a text that is poignant but also contains a touch of humour



Harmeet Rattan: Using stone from Greece, Harmeet creates a tower that is an emblem of the middle-class dream of home ownership. Three different kinds of buildings are fused into one, combining tradition and modernity in a single structure



Shaik Azgharali: For the Art Soirée he has adapted to the new medium of marble by depicting cotton bolls ready for harvest, selecting Carrara marble renowned for its whiteness as the perfect vehicle

> “Our goal is to solidify StoneX’s role as a global leader in bridging the gap between art and stone, positioning marble as an essential and revered medium in both the art and design industries.”
>
> — GAURAV AGGARWAL

own individuality. Witnessing their creative processes has profoundly enhanced my appreciation for the infinite potential of natural stone and the myriad beautiful ways it can be reimagined.

You’ve created a platform for sculptors and designers to push boundaries. What’s your ultimate dream for how StoneX can inspire the next generation of creatives working with natural materials?

My ultimate dream for StoneX is to create a platform where sculptors and designers are not only supported but are given the tools, machinery, and infrastructure they need to truly push the boundaries of creativity. Just as when I started in the marble business 20 years ago, the goal was always to enjoy the journey of appreciating marble. That goal remains unchanged.

For us, it's about continually enjoying, learning, and unlearning marble art as we explore new possibilities in the field.

Every day is a new day—one filled with curiosity, excitement, and a drive to evolve. Through StoneX, I hope to inspire the next generation of creatives to approach natural materials with the same sense of wonder, passion, and innovation, while providing them with the resources to bring their ideas to life.

You’ve emphasized that stone is more than just a material—it’s a testament to human craftsmanship. Do you believe art in stone has a unique power to provoke thought or emotion compared to other mediums?

Absolutely, art in stone has a unique ability to provoke thought and emotion in ways that other mediums often can’t. Stone’s timeless quality carries a deep sense of history and permanence, resonating with people on a profound level. The way it’s shaped reflects not just the artist’s skill but also the connection between human hands and a material that has existed for centuries.

Unlike more fleeting materials, stone commands a sense of awe, having withstood the passage of time and carrying with it untold stories within its texture. Take, for instance, the tranquil influence of stone in a spa— it soothes both body and mind, and this same calming energy is present in art, where the stone holds not just the vision, but also the senses of the viewer. The relationship between material, craftsmanship, and history forms a profound emotional resonance, one that’s difficult to match with other mediums. It’s this fusion of artistic expression, heritage, and natural beauty that truly sets stone apart.

The Art Soirée feels like a milestone in StoneX’s journey to elevate marble as an artistic medium. Where do you hope to take this intersection of art and stone in the coming years?

Our vision is to build lasting relationships with artists from around the globe. We aim to create a dynamic platform where creativity and craftsmanship can truly flourish, continuously pushing the boundaries of what's possible with marble as a medium.

At StoneX, we have the specialized machinery, cutting-edge software, and deep expertise necessary to collaborate with renowned artists like Peter Randall-Page, who have extensive experience working with marble. We're committed to fostering more partnerships with artists, ensuring they have complete confidence in sourcing the finest marble from quarries worldwide for their work. Our support goes beyond just sourcing; we provide access to the latest technologies and manage the entire process—from sourcing the marble to the final finishing touches of each piece.

In the years to come, we hope to see marble celebrated not only as a traditional material for architecture and design but as a leading medium in the art world. Our goal is to solidify StoneX’s role as a global leader in bridging the gap between art and stone, positioning marble as an essential and revered medium in both the art and design industries.

Looking ahead, are there specific stories, emotions, or concepts you’d like to see artists explore through natural stone in future collaborations with StoneX?

Looking ahead, I’d love to see artists explore the concept of "timelessness" through natural stone in future collaborations with StoneX. I hope to see artists push the boundaries of what stone can represent, creating pieces that evoke a deeper emotional connection while celebrating the material’s rich history and beauty.

COVER FEATURE

Design Without Limits:

THE ARCHOHM STORY

A deep dive into the studio that's reshaping India's built environment with spontaneity, diplomacy, and a 'people-first' spirit. Sourabh Gupta, Mridu Sahai Patnaik, and Kunal Savarkar reflect on a legacy that refuses categorisation and tackles everything—from urban planning and cultural institutions, to transportation hubs and private residences with equal enthusiasm—and what's next!

INTERVIEW: **KASHISH KAUSHAL** PORTRAITS: **HARRIS GEORGE STEPHEN**

ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY:
ANDRE J FANTHOME, VIPIN KUMAR AND NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Established by Sourabh Gupta at the dawn of the new millennium, Archohm isn't your typical architecture firm. This multidisciplinary studio is a force that rebels against convention, keeps challenging the boundaries of what design can achieve in India, and has grown from a bold idea into a high-spirited force with over 100 staff across offices in Noida, Mumbai, and Shillong. With principals Mridu Sahai Patnaik and Kunal Savarkar by his side, Sourabh has guided Archohm through 25 years of transformation and evolution, looping cultural sensitivity into projects that spread across urban planning, cultural institutions, and private residences. As they commemorate this milestone in 2025, it transpires as a movement—one that diversifies India's built environment with optimism and valour.

"'Spontaneously' is the word that best describes this," they remark while explaining how Archohm grew from Delhi's quirky 'caterpillar' pedestrian subways to a practice that refuses to fit in a box. From the sculptural Mumbai Metro stations to the heritage-driven Hussainabad Masterplan in Lucknow, Archohm's work is an exemplification of their mantra—"We will design everything. Period." This refusal to be pigeonholed comes from a founding ethos Sourabh instilled early on; "A guiding thought behind Archohm from its inception has been a desire to be larger than the founder." It's a vision that has nurtured a collective of dreamers (architects, engineers, and creatives) who see design as a tool to solve society's myriad challenges.

In this interview, Sourabh, Mridu and Kunal peel back the layers of Archohm's unconventional methodology. There is a sense of warmth in how they talk about those early days and moments that still make them smile. Kunal remembers being drawn in by that first 'caterpillar' subway in 2007. "It's been a journey filled with cement, steel, travel, and magic," he says, "where no two days have been the same". For Mridu, it was a chance meeting with Sourabh, a family friend, that pulled her in. Fresh from studying fashion in the UK, she saw in him "a passionate young design entrepreneur and a man on a mission," and together they built The Design Village, their decade-old design school.

"The interesting aspect is that we all feel 'young'," they all confess, hinting at a future brimming with ambition. Archohm's journey has been anything but straightforward—shaped by marathon public projects like Dilli Haat Janakpuri, which took eight years of perseverance, and diplomatic victories like the Taj Ganj Redevelopment in Agra, where they persuaded the Supreme Court to replace tarmac with red cobbles to protect the Taj's marble. These accounts of moral fibre and ingenuity define a practice that prospers on tightropes, treading a fine line between grandeur and responsibility.

"We strongly believe we can make a difference to India," they affirm—a conviction that fuels their work across both public and private spheres, from metro hubs to minimalist residences like the LIT House. Archohm's portfolio fascinates with its versatility. The Museum of Socialism signifies their holistic approach, with every detail crafted in-house. The Dalmia Gopichand Odisha Badminton Academy, a hemispheric configuration, aims to put Odisha on the global sports map, while the Patna Riverfront reimagines urban edges with the river as the protagonist.

Looking ahead, Archohm's principals are full of infectious energy. They hint at rebooting with fresh typologies and geographies, unwilling to let 25 years define their limits. "We spoke the engineering language; of speed and solutions," they recall of the Mumbai Metro, a mindset they'll carry into new frontiers—perhaps sustainable riverfronts or sports cities that inspire hope. Their hunger for talent remains insatiable, seeking hardworking learners who believe in problem-solving. As Sourabh puts it, "Archohm is a practice where talented and hardworking professionals can see growth, fulfilment and the joy of seeing their dreams come to life—in a literal sense as well!" Through trials, triumphs, and a relentless pursuit of impact, Archohm is setting up benchmarks of how architecture should be and not just what architecture is. In the pages ahead, dive into their tale of imagination, resilience, and a defiant refusal to settle, proving that after a quarter-century, this 'young' practice is just getting started.

Kashish Kaushal (KK): Sourabh, I want to start from the beginning but also not put you through the pain of repeating yourself. So, let's remix the question a little: Looking back 25 years, what's the origin story (any anecdote) or a 'what if' moment from those early days that still makes you smile, and how did it secretly fuel the firm's ethos?

Sourabh Gupta (SG): I could start by saying I could write a book on my failures. There's no end to the 'what if' moments, but I'm too much of an optimist. I keep my 'DL2S F1244 Kinetic Honda' in my office room to constantly remind me of all the good and the bad. To us, every project we lost was, of course, unfair to us, and the ones we won were obviously secured through awesome processes. That said, every challenge we faced was an opportunity. Every time I saw large-scale interventions in Delhi, be it the metro stations or public spaces, I felt so much more could be done. I knew that infrastructure defines our skyline, the image of a city, and it propelled us to look at it more closely and attempt to engage with it. At the office, we call it the 'Delhi tax'—the extraordinary motivation and effort needed to make our city count. Working on projects like the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway as an experiment in experience design for commuters was a new beginning for the city—how an expressway could behave and have an identity, how it could look and feel architectural. Twenty years ago, and even now, it's a new and unknown phenomenon.

> "
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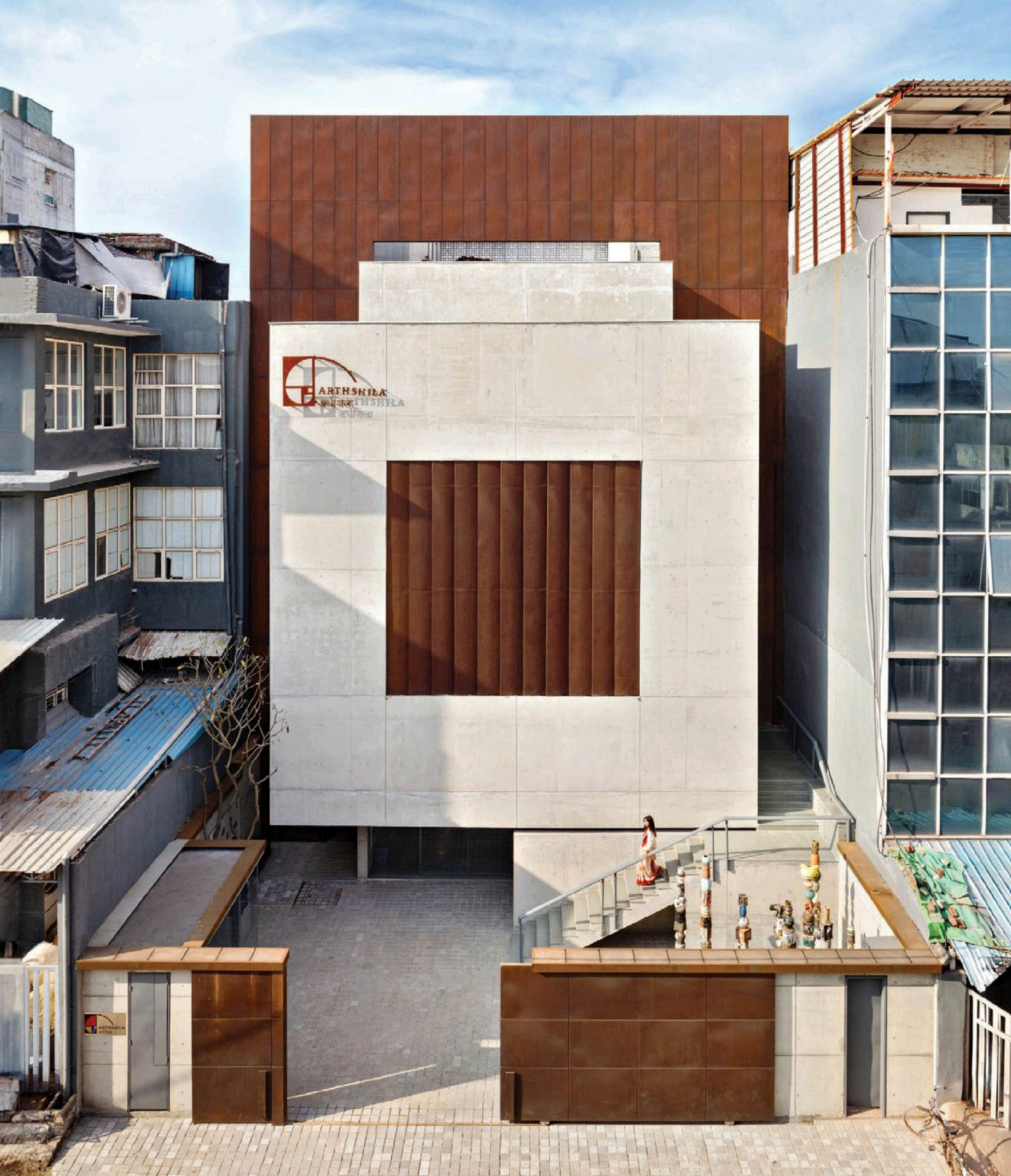
> *Fortunately, or otherwise, the growth of a design practice is anything but predictable. The scale of our projects, the challenging timelines, their diversity of end-use and clientele; these factors contributed to our team growing by leaps and bounds in different geographies."*
>
> —**SOURABH GUPTA,** *Principal Architect & Founder, Archohm*

Designed to foster a culture of art appreciation accessible to all, Arthshila in Okhla integrates diverse artistic expressions. Bridging heritage, tradition, and contemporary narratives, the center features a mix of open, semi-open, and enclosed exhibition areas, an auditorium, and a cafe; *Photographs by Noughts & Crosses*



> *The relationship between architecture and the environment is paramount for fostering a healthier planet and for the long-term well-being of both society and the Earth. Therefore, the role of the architect needs a redefinition - from that of a Star architect to being a Service architect."*
>
> —**MRIDU SAHAI PATNAIK,** *Partner, Archohm*

QUICK TAKES

- **Concrete or glass—which material wins in a design showdown for you, and why?**
Timber. It is the future.

- **What's the one architectural trend you wish would disappear forever?**
Instragramable Architecture - Good Content over Good Architecture.

- **Name a building you'd love to live in, designed by someone else!**
La Tourette by Le Corbusier. In today's context, we admire works of Sejima, Chipperfield, Zumthor whose architecture is neither flamboyant nor self-referential.

- **Sketch by hand or digital render—which feels more like 'home' to you?**
At the core, for us, it always begins with a sketch.

- **If you could borrow one architect's brain for a day—dead or alive—who's it going to be?**
Le Corbusier, while doing public work in India, we marvel at what he did with Chandigarh post-Independence.

Sourabh Gupta
Photography: Harris George Stephen
Assistant Photographer: Neelanchal Gupta
Art Direction: Akanksha Thapa, Harris George Stephen, Neelanchal Gupta

More recently, the arched cable footbridges of Delhi have become an image of the city. We fought for them with the Public Works Department and every lobby to go the distance, and now we see these arches springing up everywhere. It was a worthy investment. And now, we are the architects of the New Delhi Railway Station, the largest and densest node in this part of the world. This is where one needs to channel all creative energies and enthusiasm into making infrastructure projects a moment in time to reorganize our urban fabric. Stations are gateways into the city, an introduction—a city's visiting card. They need all the architectural attention. One must transform these machined spaces into places for people.

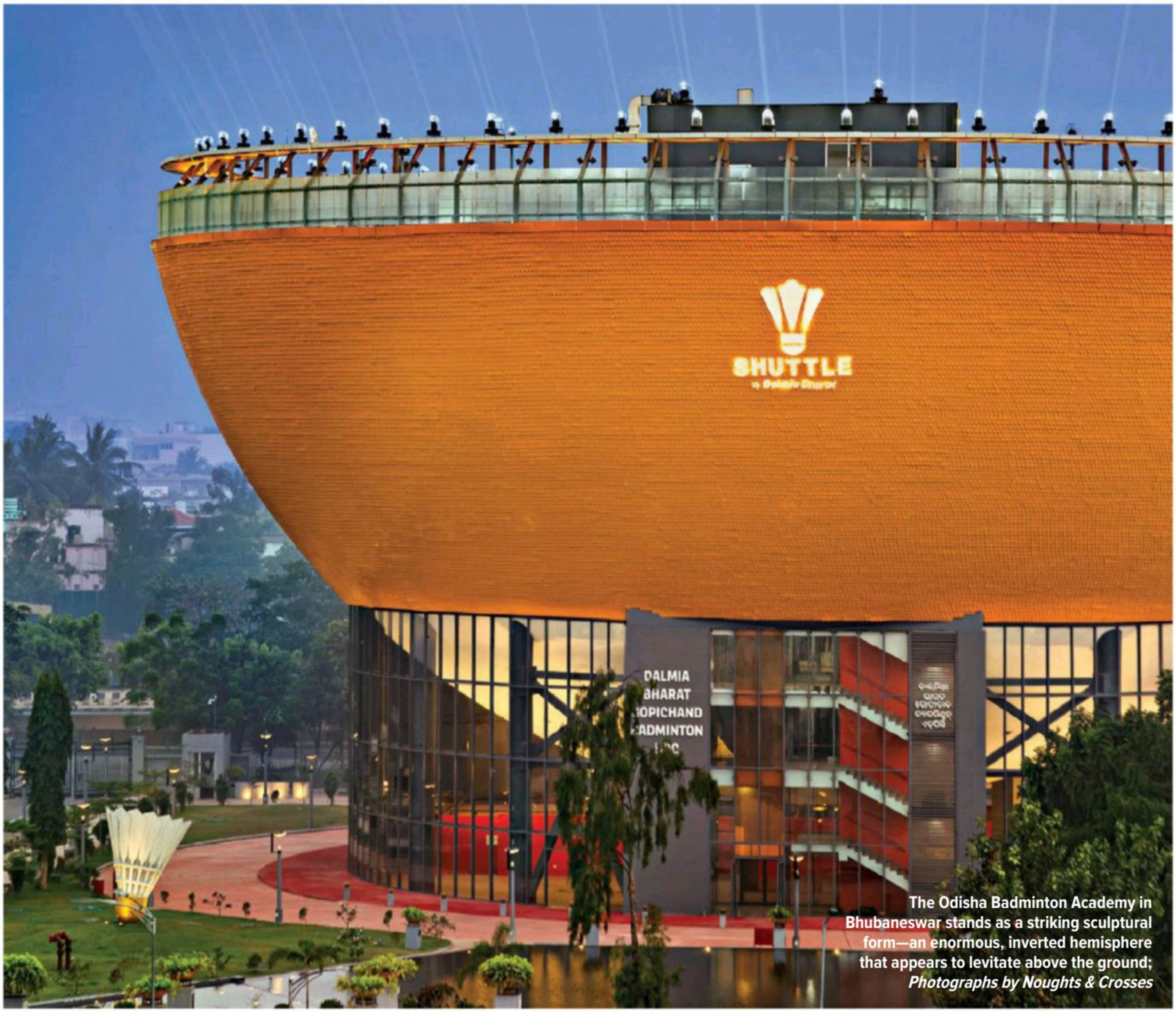
KK: Kunal, you've been part of Archohm's story as well—can you share what drew you to this multidisciplinary practice, and how your role has evolved over time?

Kunal Savarkar (KS): We architects are romantics at heart, and storytellers, and this story begins with playing LEGO together as children aged 5 and 7! We built entire towns out of marble chips, a byproduct of hand cut marble, sadly replaced by machine cutting. On a serious note, it was Sourabh's delightful 'caterpillar' subway structure that drew me first to Archohm- back in 2007. And since then, it has been a wondrous journey, filled with cement, steel, travel and magic; where no two days have been the same. From associating for a project to working on our Libyan mega-projects in the Sahara Desert, to helping create the first Archo-tour, being part of the first Archoforum; editing the first Archohmeter, and I could go on and on. But- and this goes for all at Archohm- it's a journey of self-growth and discovering one's potential.

KK: Mridu, as a key figure in the firm, how did you come to join Archohm, and what was it about the studio's approach that resonated with you?

Mridu Sahai Patnaik (MS): I studied fashion at NIFT New Delhi and at 21, I met Sourabh, a family friend. I was at the time busy making bags and clothes of cork and my interests were always multidisciplinary. And perhaps that is where there was a certain alignment. Therefore, once I graduated from the UK, I joined him in the practice. He was a discerning architect, a passionate young design entrepreneur and a man on a mission.

Sourabh studied in the Netherlands and hence we also shared the vision of bridging the gap between design education in India and the world, except that he came with deeper courage, audacious optimism and provided the project the means to do so. Piggybacking Archohm, while running the practice, we worked together on our dream project of our design institute - The Design Village which is now a decade old. Archohm is the mothership of our design school.


SHUTTLE
by Dalmia Bharat
DALMIA
BHARAT
GOPICHAND
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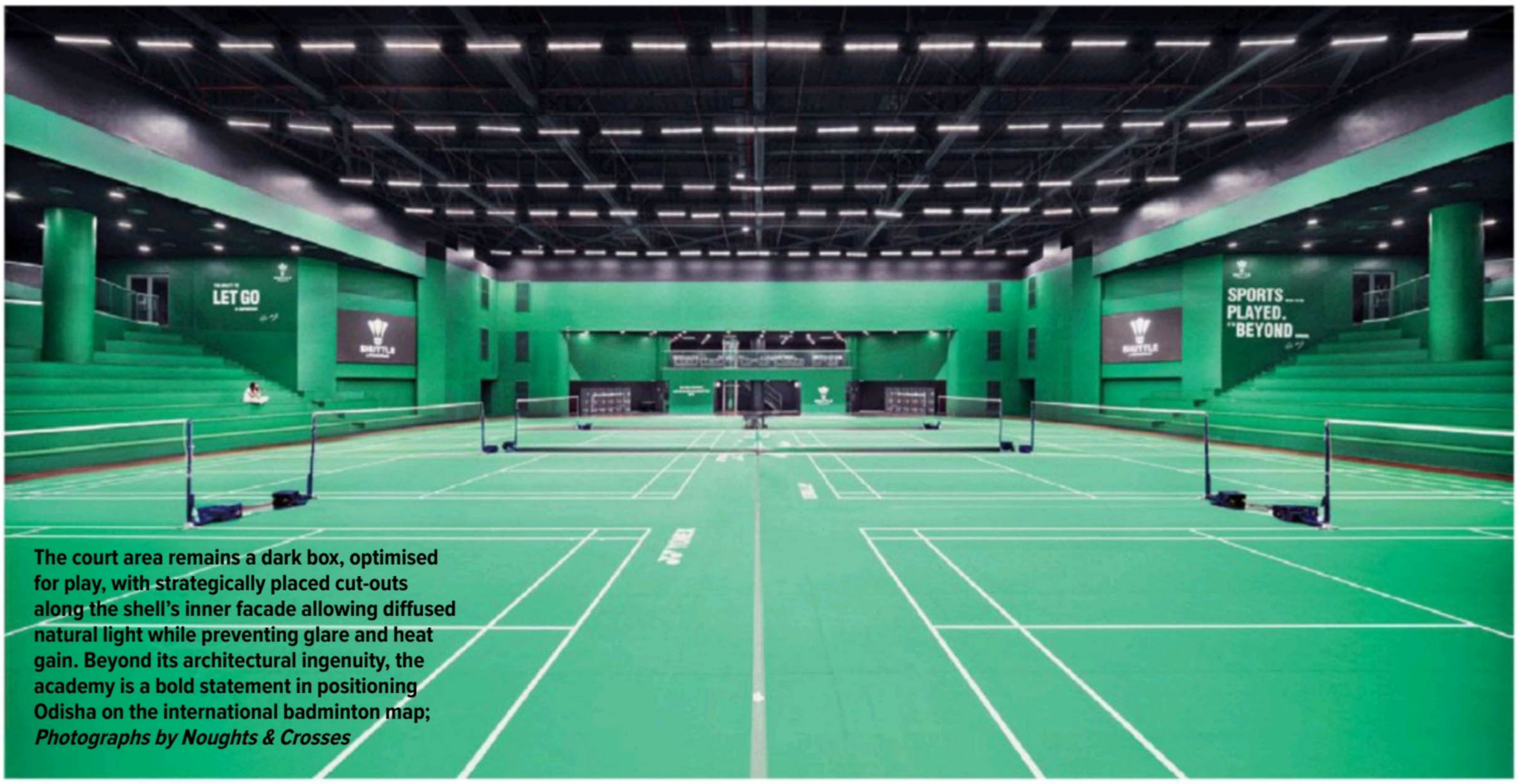
The Odisha Badminton Academy in Bhubaneswar stands as a striking sculptural form—an enormous, inverted hemisphere that appears to levitate above the ground; *Photographs by Noughts & Crosses*


LET GO
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SPORTS
PLAYED.
BEYOND
SHUTTLE

The court area remains a dark box, optimised for play, with strategically placed cut-outs along the shell's inner facade allowing diffused natural light while preventing glare and heat gain. Beyond its architectural ingenuity, the academy is a bold statement in positioning Odisha on the international badminton map; *Photographs by Noughts & Crosses*

In essence, the philosophy of Archohm truly comes out through this - of our intention of going beyond architecture, always having an aspiration to do something for the country we belong to and for the fraternity we come from. Being at Archohm for over 15 years, now when I look back, not only did I embrace Architecture 101, but I felt that all our audacious ideas and wish lists seem to have come true simply because of our open attitude as a practice. I remember making a bucket list on the day I came and within a year I had outgrown it! Archohm has been like a playground, a laboratory that has propelled many successful careers. It is heartening when I still regularly get calls from Archohm alumni (yes that's what they are called) that their time at the studio has been one of the most defining experiences of their lives - be it the nature of work, the rigour experienced or being thrown at the deep end.

KK: With over 100 staff members at offices in Delhi and Mumbai, how did the office grow and evolve to this scale?
SG: Architects, engineers, interior designers, and creative people of each and every hue and shade have contributed to making Archohm the vibrant young practice that it is, even aged 25. The scale of our projects, the challenging timelines, their diversity of end-use and clientele; these factors contributed to our team growing horizontally across states and vertically deeper into various domains. In an evolving India, speed is of essence, also, the complexity of our evolution needs more hands on the deck. We look at this as an opportunity to grow people within and around us. We constantly debate scale with sanctity and speed of design.

It takes a village...' and the key word for us is 'impact. and we do what it takes as an office.

KK: In the architecture world today, everything seems to be driven around the idea of 'star architects' wanting to imprint their own stamp of architecture, regardless of contextual integrity - Archohm refrains from this phenomenon. Why?
MS: The relationship between architecture and the environment is paramount for fostering a healthier planet and for the long-term well-being of both society and the Earth. Therefore, the role of the architect needs a redefinition - from that of a Star architect to being a Service architect. Let the Star architect be the most responsible one! At Archohm we have always sought directions in contemporary Indian architecture. Our work is a testament to our decolonized avatar and a nod to the resilient Indian that resides in it. Constantly we struggle not to let our clients ape the past or the West.

It is time, as architects, to pivot - to become torchbearers and benchmarks of how architecture should be and not just what architecture is. Responding to immediate context is not enough, our local and global responsibility must be considered. We pledge to think of the planet first, to create a brand-new tabula rasa - one that is accountable and adaptable. One that never stops asking questions. And never stops finding solutions.

KK: Architects may not be the best managers of an office. How do you navigate this issue at your practice?
KS: Architects need to be good negotiators. They need to constantly navigate within boundaries of client brief and budgets. They also need to have the courage and skill to go the distance on the 'right' agenda. They need reasonably good management skills.

However, we do face this challenge at different stages - some architects are extremely designerly and conceptual while others

People of Archohm
Photography: Harris George Stephen
Assistant Photographer: Neelanchal Gupta
Art Direction: Sourabh Gupta, Akanksha Thapa, Harris George Stephen, Neelanchal Gupta

being great technically and then there are ones that have client management skills. Currently we are experimenting with dual leadership comprising of a Design Leaders & a Project Manager. This is a global drift in architectural organisations.

Collaboration and teamwork are key in these complex times.

KK: How do you strategize the business development effort? Is there a conscious choice to have a fair share of Public and Private work or is this driven by the scale and nature of the project? What are the key considerations for participating in a bid or doing a competition?

SG: Archohm began with a small public project which Delhiites referred to as the 'caterpillar' pedestrian subways near the bustling Moolchand intersection. We are a rare practice, with our work being divided almost equally into monumental public works including administrative buildings, commercial centres, metro stations, TOD hubs, hospitals, agricultural mandis, as well as private residences, developer-led projects and interiors. We strongly believe we can make a difference to India, we want young Indians to be exposed to the best design possible, to understand that the journey to being a first-world nation begins with thought, in one's mind. Participating in bids or competitions is thus a necessary evil, which we look at as part of the pain of giving birth to projects of societal change.

> *"We architects are romantics at heart, and storytellers, and this story begins with playing LEGO together as children aged 5 and 7! On a serious note, it was Sourabh's delightful 'caterpillar' subway structure that drew me first to Archohm- back in 2007."*
>
> —**KUNAL SAVARKAR,** *Archohm*

KK: Given the large volume of applications to your practice, how do you recruit talent? What are the key values and attributes you look for in an aspiring candidate?

MS: We are hungry for talent. We have always been. We want to attract all who see design as a solution to the myriad problems faced by society. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept more than a miniscule percentage of those who apply to work with us, but we are keen that designers from diverse regions work with us. We look for hardworking learners who believe in problem-solving. On a humourous note, our CFO had a sign in his office that read 'no cribbing'. We mean that!

KK: What is the culture at the practice? How do you retain talented people?

MS: Well, we'd like to think that we offer a very conducive learning environment and therefore we are constantly in a state of flux. We always like to believe there is no room for office politics because everyone is so busy all the time!

We hold ourselves to high benchmarks and that takes work. Archohm is a practice where talented and hardworking professionals can see growth, fulfilment and the joy of seeing their dreams come to life- in a literal sense as well!

Mridu Sahai Patnaik
Photography: Harris George Stephen
Assistant Photographer: Neelanchal Gupta
Art Direction: Sourabh Gupta, Akanksha Thapa, Harris George Stephen, Neelanchal Gupta

As a parting shot- this is a team that believes in having a lot of fun together. There is never a dull moment in Archohm - with something or the other happening every week, and of course you can chill on our terrace lawn, grab an Araku coffee on campus or knock a shuttlecock about in our indoor badminton court.

We are a restless and rigorous practice.

KK: How did Archohm approach the Taj Ganj Redevelopment in Agra to balance stakeholder interests and rejuvenate the urban fabric?

SG: The tale of Taj Ganj, Agra, emerges from the qualitative relationship between built volume and built density—the open spaces and their spatial configuration—the urban layout. The vernacular materials, sensitive interventions and green spaces imbibed together are key elements for the urban microclimate. The project connects the built environment, natural flows, systems and living traditions to take responsibility and rejuvenate the urban historic fabric of Agra. While the idea has been to make visitors keep coming to Agra, to prolong their stay and thus revive the urban economy, the intent has been to create a symbiotic conversation. In concurrence, the interests of all stakeholders have been considered—tourists (both national and international), local denizens, policy makers, people, artists and historians alike. With the inception of Taj Ganj redevelopment project, from large scale interventions to the street level signages, from planning to the last detail of pavements, the emphasis has been on vernacular materials—red sandstone, cobblestone, perforated jali and urban greening while simultaneously preserving the existing green spaces. Thus, the old city literally lays out a “red carpet” for all, to visit the world-wonder and more importantly, to help citizens preserve their livelihoods.

There were a total of 11 stakeholders of the Taj complex. The primary one being Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department. However, U.P. Rajkiya Nirman Nigam was appointed as the nodal agency for commissioning the design and execution to the consultant and contractors. The project underwent layers of approvals from the forest department, the Taj Trapezium Zone, National Monument Authority and the Archaeological Survey of India, that vetted the project and its impact on their respective domains. Amidst navigating bureaucratic hurdles, contractor dynamics, media scrutiny, and public opinion, even the Supreme Court had to be convinced by showing how the annual tarmac overlays of the roads were polluting the white Macrana marble and therefore had to be replaced with the local red Agra cobbles—rationales on the basis of cost, maintenance, aesthetic and narrative had to be presented. The journey was long and with a lot of lessons—especially those of diplomacy.

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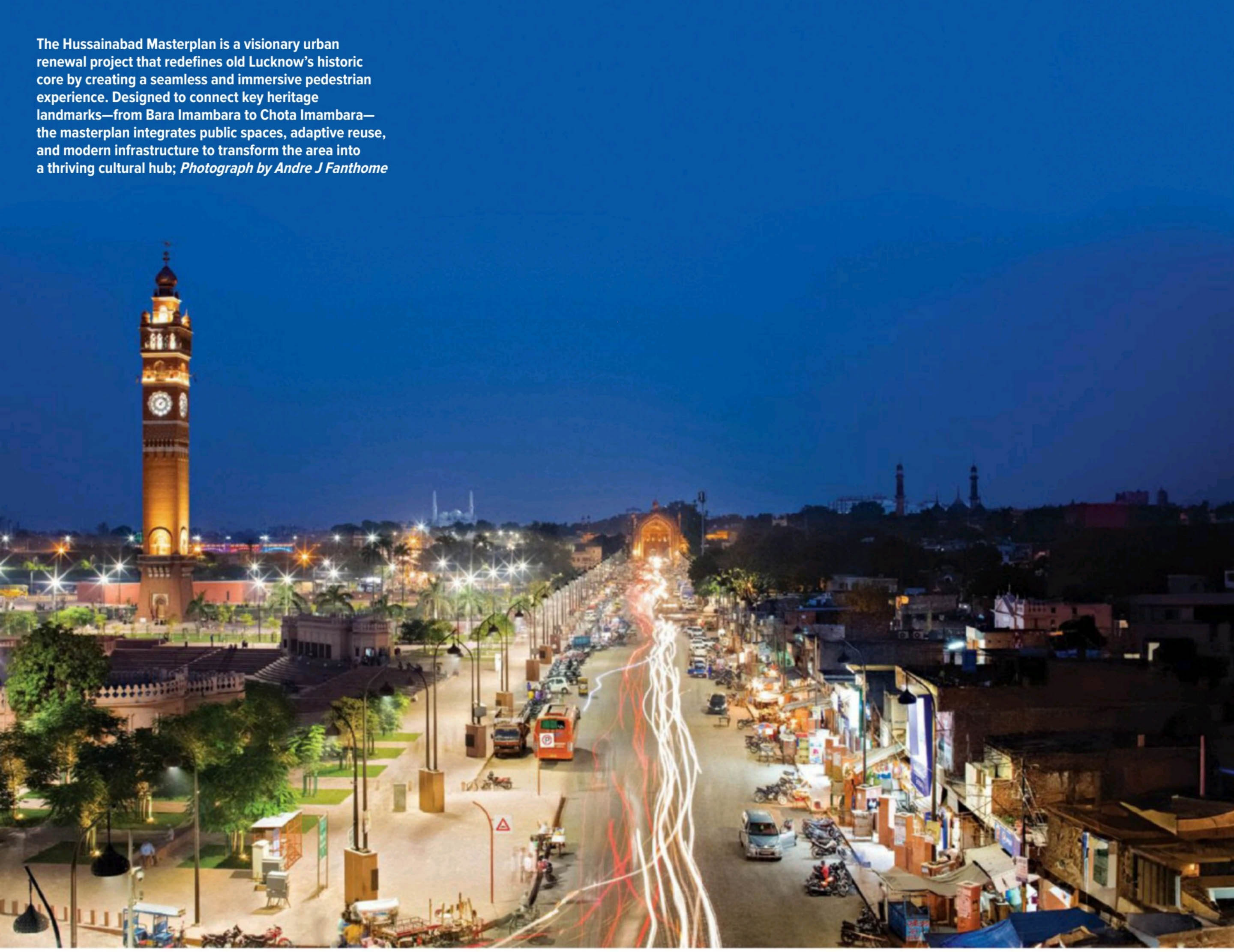
With the inception of Taj Ganj redevelopment project, from large scale interventions to the street level signages, from planning to the last detail of pavements, the emphasis has been on vernacular materials—red sandstone, cobblestone, perforated jali and urban greening while simultaneously preserving the existing green spaces.”

—**SOURABH GUPTA,** *Principal Architect & Founder, Archohm*

The Taj Ganj Redevelopment project is a transformative urban initiative aimed at revitalising the historic fabric of Agra while enhancing its cultural and economic landscape

The Hussainabad Masterplan is a visionary urban renewal project that redefines old Lucknow's historic core by creating a seamless and immersive pedestrian experience. Designed to connect key heritage landmarks—from Bara Imambara to Chota Imambara—the masterplan integrates public spaces, adaptive reuse, and modern infrastructure to transform the area into a thriving cultural hub; *Photograph by Andre J Fanthome*



KK: What inspired the vision for the Hussainabad Masterplan in Lucknow, and how did it evolve from its original brief?
MS: The city of Nawabs is blessed to have rich heritage and the old city's architecture has been a witness to the same. However, old Lucknow was a dense chaotic urban complex. In order to bring its age-old stories to citizens and tourists, we proposed to rejuvenate the old city by connecting all heritage monuments from Bara Imambara to Chota Imambara through a meaningful and experiential pedestrian route. The integrated development of Hussainabad zone therefore is a step towards acknowledging heritage value through urban design. The master plan envisions this public space as a heritage hub with programs like the Avadh Museum, services, amenities, adaptive re-use of old buildings, multi-level parking, food courts and establishing new relief road networks in the larger context while widening alternate routes. They essentially anchor the transformation into a fully pedestrianized stretch. India is in a state of flux, our systems are evolving and getting more and more streamlined. In such a scenario, questioning the brief still stands a fair chance. It may come as a shock that the rejuvenation project of the old of Lucknow's original brief was to relocate a smelling sewage treatment plant that lay enroute the Rumi Gate. Once we visited the site, the opportunity became clear. With intent and persistent persuasion, we reframed the project's vision—to connect all heritage monuments from Bara Imambara to Chota Imambara through a meaningful and experiential pedestrian route.

KK: How did the collaboration with MVRDV shape the Oranje housing project in Lucknow, and what makes it stand out in Indian residential design?
KS: Oranje—a self-contained housing project brings a paradigm shift in how housing projects are conceived in India. Situated in one of the upcoming areas of Lucknow on a 7-acre plot of land, Oranje overlooks the Gomti river across its green buffer. It comprises a total of 437 units with a mix of typologies from 3 BHK standard apartments to 3 & 4 BHK units with exclusive terraces as well as luxurious 5 BHK penthouses with private terraces. Conceptually, the design breaks away from the conventional tower morphology, where a typical tower is designed and stamped all over the site with little regard for orientation, massing, variation or privacy. Contrary to this, dwelling units in Oranje are arranged in a ring form around a large courtyard, ensuring landscape connection for each apartment. The central courtyard has been planned in a way that it creates the maximum possible distance between two apartments allowing for enough privacy as well as adequate natural light and ventilation to all units. The massing of the built form modulates at the upper floor to make room for private terraces, thus breaking the monotony

> *The Hussainabad master plan envisions this public space as a heritage hub with programs like the Avadh Museum, services, amenities, adaptive re-use of old buildings, multi-level parking, food courts and establishing new relief road networks in the larger context while widening alternate routes."*
>
> —**MRIDU SAHAI PATNAIK,** *Partner, Archohm*

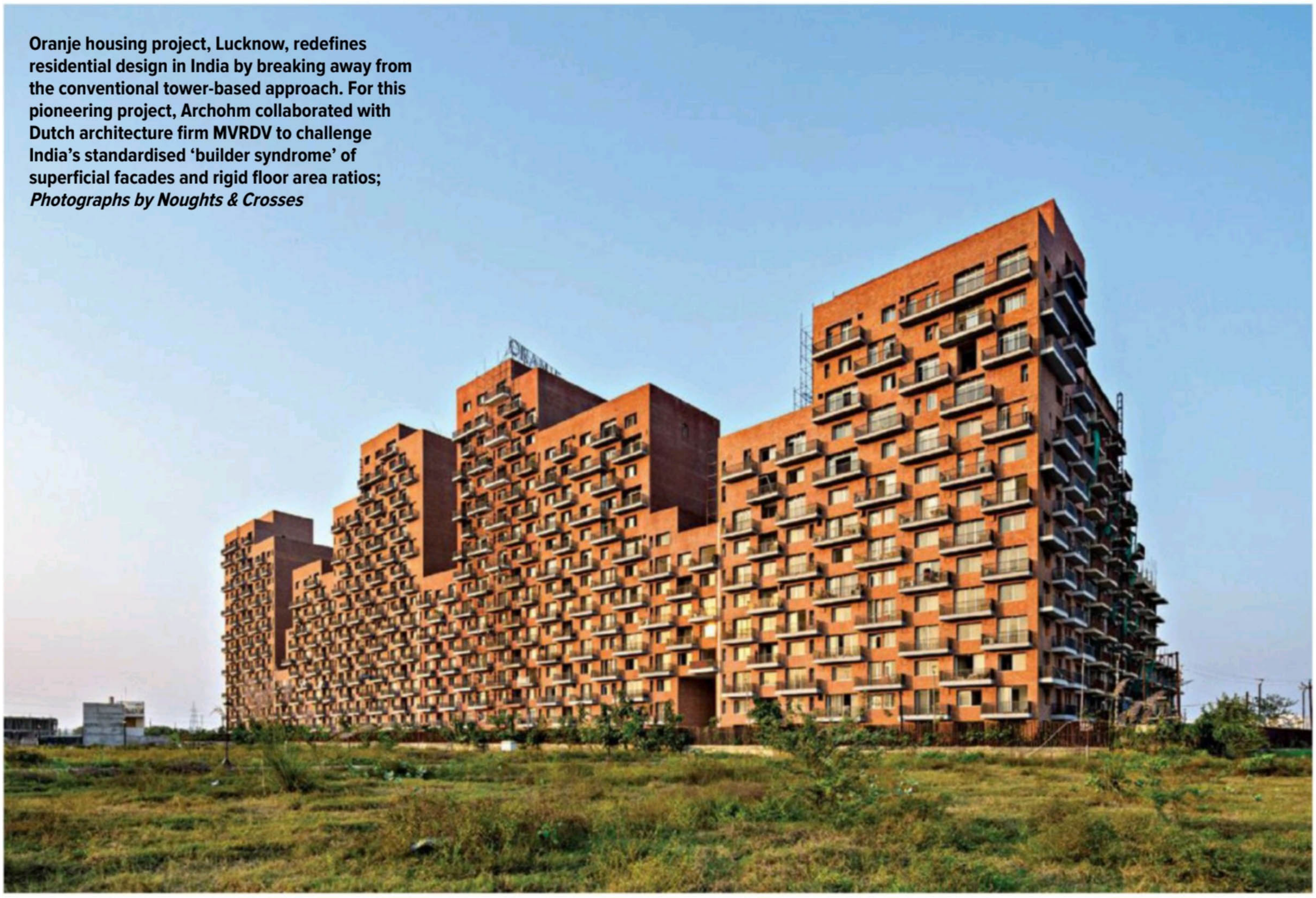
in the silhouette. As a result, no two towers are identical. For the Oranje housing project, Archohm invited Dutch architectural firm MVRDV to collaborate to incite developers to break away from the builder syndrome of 2ft architecture that of facades and FAR, prevalent in India today.

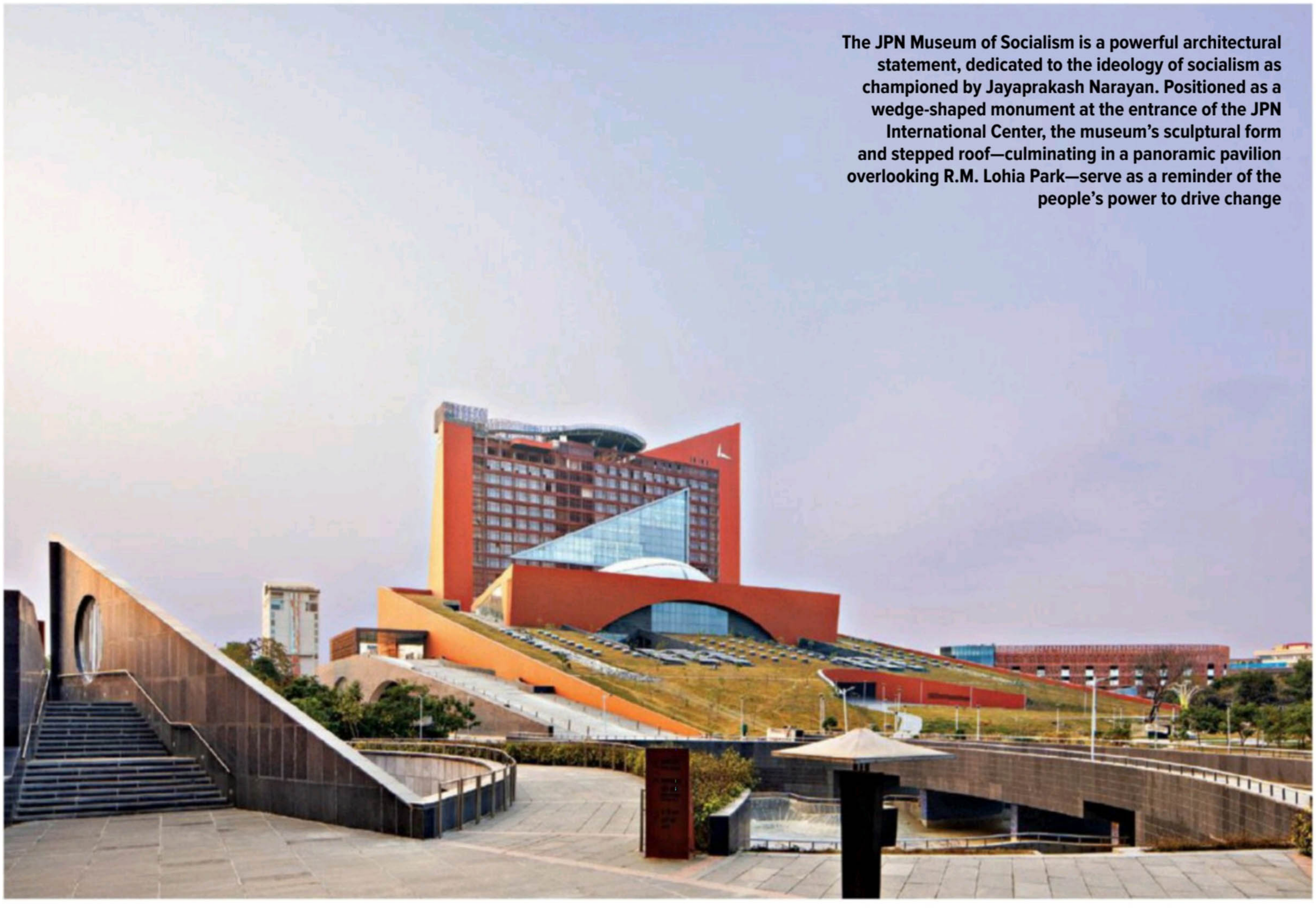
KK: What makes the Museum of Socialism a standout example of Archohm's multidisciplinary approach?

SG: The JPN Museum of Socialism is a museum on the ideology of "socialism" propagated by renowned national leader—Shri. Jaya Prakash Narayan. It is also a gateway framing the JPN International Center, placed as a wedged-shaped monument. Its stepped roof terminates in a pavilion that gives a panoramic view of the R.M. Lohia Park. The museum inserted as an anchor point, defining a principal node of the city along with its bold and sculptural form, seems destined to remind people of the immense power they possess; the power to bring about change. The museum is an experience in space design with the depiction of Jayaprakash Narayan as a chronological narrative of a linear journey. It is divided into two zones; the zone of absorption and the zone of reflection. As the names suggest, these spaces enable absorption of information triggering curiosity and contemplation which then is expected to lead to reflection and assimilation. Thus, the museum is not just a container that preserves frozen albeit inspiring moments of the past but breeds them and ensures that they percolate into current reality and lay the foundation for the future. While various exhibits and narratives remain center stage, the building offers surfaces, volumes and elements as tactile backdrops. The Museum of Socialism is a perfect example of a project which follows a non-silo design approach. Urban design, architecture, interior design, experience design, graphics, product, publication, branding and even the paperweight of the museum were designed all under one roof. The victory of the project is the seamlessness of how design decisions flow to the last detail. From conception to completion, it has been one of the most holistic projects undertaken by the studio.

KK: How did Archohm maintain focus and momentum during the eight-year journey of Dilli Haat Janakpuri?

MS: As a design philosophy, with two Dilli Haats already in the city, the design elements were questioned at multiple levels. Fundamentally, all Dilli Haats—artisan markets—need to have a common ground of bringing artisans to interface with city dwellers by eliminating the middlemen. All the Haats need their own identity to attract people not only from their own neighborhood, but from the city and country at large. Haats have to be progressive, in tune with today's times while respecting the craft and cultural centricity of the project.


Oranje housing project, Lucknow, redefines residential design in India by breaking away from the conventional tower-based approach. For this pioneering project, Archohm collaborated with Dutch architecture firm MVRDV to challenge India's standardised 'builder syndrome' of superficial facades and rigid floor area ratios; ***Photographs by Noughts & Crosses***


The JPN Museum of Socialism is a powerful architectural statement, dedicated to the ideology of socialism as championed by Jayaprakash Narayan. Positioned as a wedge-shaped monument at the entrance of the JPN International Center, the museum's sculptural form and stepped roof—culminating in a panoramic pavilion overlooking R.M. Lohia Park—serve as a reminder of the people's power to drive change

> *The JPN Museum of Socialism is a museum on the ideology of "socialism" propagated by renowned national leader—Shri. Jaya Prakash Narayan. It is also a gateway framing the JPN International Center, placed as a wedged-shaped monument."*
>
> —**SOURABH GUPTA,** *Principal Architect & Founder, Archohm*

The design solution therefore is a conversation between the past and the present, acknowledgement of the traditional and adaptation of the contemporary, both in concept and construction. The final functionality found an indoor, well-equipped, 800-capacity auditorium for formal concerts and an informal open-air amphitheater that works simultaneously with independent spaces and support services. A large, air-conditioned food court extends into shaded courtyards and expansive greens for the basic need of spillovers. Formal, informal and open shop spaces are created to bring in the required sensitive adaptations of malls, markets and bazaars into this Haat. An independent fine dining with an extended banquet facility is created to reinforce the business plan of this complex cultural complex. Dilli Haat Janakpuri was the first significant public project of the office and it took eight years to realize. In these eight years, the government administration got shuffled, and six executive engineers changed. Five project architects relayed the project. The project was a marathon and a test of patience. What kept one motivated was that the project was not shelved, the impact of the project outweighed the multiple, repetitive, rigorous design discussions. At the end of the day, the architects were the only constant stakeholders. "In my opinion, this young practice was always there to share and exhibit the importance and role of design in the development and growth of this country."—Jose Kurian, former chief engineer, Delhi tourism and transport corporation.

KK: What was Archohm's strategy for designing the Mumbai Metro stations to address both functionality and urban identity?
KS: The metro stations commissioned by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) are designed with a variety of details to give a visually calm infrastructure oasis to the city. The idea was to conceive a system that could adapt to the constraints of the context, without compromising on the identity of the station. Every pain point in the experience was addressed and the vocabulary of the station in this dense and tight metropolitan morphology was prioritized. From vertical louvers that give a monolithic appearance to the actual frames that provide much needed rain and sun protection. The metro station color scheme orientates the city with its commute system. The minimal interiors and materials keep the 'building' in the background of its commuters. All utilities, lights, and pipes have been hidden meticulously while remaining functional. Controlled use of glass and aluminum has been done to withstand the sea salt and rains. Finally, the metro columns and the viaduct that span the entire Mumbai are marked with a crisp color line that does add to the visual chaos of Mumbai but as a navigation signage. From 'let the architect decide the flooring pattern' to 'design the complex composition of these junctions', we have come a long way. Unlike other architectural commissions, metro projects are classic examples where engineers call the shots, head decisions, and direct construction. This phenomenon limits the architect's scope to superficial form and color, as mere aesthetic advisors. There are usually a lot of methods and no madness in such projects—disruptions are unwelcome, and rethinking, and reinventing are not appreciated. Unless your design idea solves some clear issues and makes some paradigm shifts in the protocols, it heeds no interest. We spoke the engineering language; of speed and solutions. The final design walked the path of simplicity and rhythm to ensure smooth execution and perhaps less effort, and thereby less resistance. Our product had to be tested. At an urban level and at an architectural level; and to keep things minimal was a defining choice. One had to respond to the chaos and clutter of Mumbai's contradicting coexistence; the spread of slums and tall towers. We responded with restraint. The idea was to conceive an avant-garde system, a kit of parts that can adapt and still keep its identity intact. Proposing and vetting every drawing being dished out for the construction of more than eighty stations has been a trajectory most cherished.

KK: How does the Dalmia Gopichand Odisha Badminton Academy in Bhubaneswar reflect Archohm's vision for sports architecture?
SG: The Odisha Badminton Academy is an enormous, inverted hemisphere that sits like a sculpture with the playing courts elevated above the entry plaza. The envelope of glazing at the lower level makes the building seem to levitate above the ground from a distance. The hemisphere building mass naturally forms the triple-height entrance area with a cafe and a commercial space. The structure also houses a gym, library and a science room at the mezzanine level, training facilities with 8 international sized badminton courts, a 500-seater spectator area, coach rooms, and public amenities. The court area remains a dark box; as per its functional need. However, the cut-outs in the slab along the inner shell facade provide enough natural diffused light to the spaces. This configuration prevents glare and restricts sunlight and heat insulating the courts within. These spaces have neatly integrated the services into the geometry of the whole. The night lighting plays with the form to give an impression of a shuttlecock.

The project aims to position the state of Odisha on the international badminton map to nurture world-class shuttlers. At the ground, the project opens up to large stadium facilities. At the top, it invites the city to experience the panoramic viewing ring. The spherical outer shell has both practical and symbolic considerations. Not only does it offer structural resilience against the annual onslaught of cyclonic winds in Bhubaneswar, but it also signifies a beacon of strength and resilience for the national academy. At dusk, the building is a visual spectacle that celebrates the academy's presence, a gesture marking Odisha's emergence as a prominent sports destination.

KK: What role does the Arthshila gallery in Okhla play in fostering cultural appreciation within Delhi's urban context?
MS: The role of museums has evolved taking various forms and scales, one of which is the modern-day gallery in the neighborhood.

The LIT House manifests the vision of a "forest in outer skin, walls made of glass", where architecture dissolves into nature through an innovative design approach. Rooted in the principles of the traditional courtyard yet reinterpreted for a contemporary setting, the design integrates with the vast landscape, fostering an indoor-outdoor connection

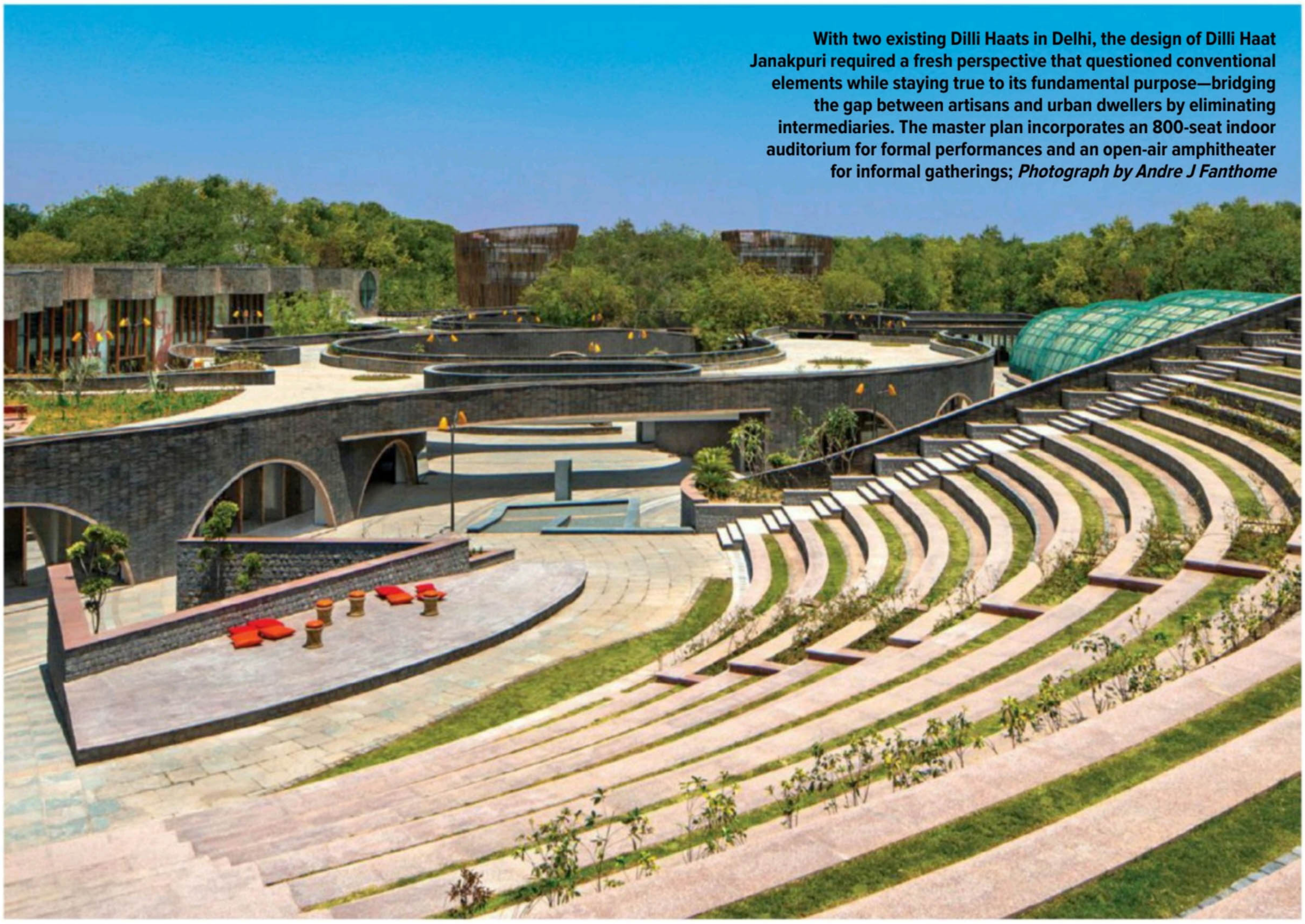
The importance of art and culture in our cities is indisputable. Private galleries play various roles in introducing art and culture into everyday life. From bringing the community together to helping emerging artists, galleries have revitalized neighborhoods.

Arthshila galleries in various cities of India are perhaps the pioneering ones in this realm. They provide a space for public participation, debates, dialogue, and meetings to cultivate a sense of belonging and identity among the users. What has been unique is that each gallery prioritizes a program based on its neigbourhood audience ranging from theatre in Patna, library in Bhopal to an art gallery in Delhi. Stimulating cultural appreciation, such spaces are also accompanied by coffee shops, bookstores, and event spaces for collective and individual reflection in the bustle of the city.

Opened recently, Arthshila at Okhla endeavors to epitomize the essence of exhibition spaces within the context of Delhi. Central to this concept is the notion that "exhibition becomes the core," influencing every aspect of the building's conceptual planning and program design. The centre seeks to build a culture of art appreciation, accessible to everyone. The various programs of the building allow this collection to present itself in a stimulating mix of genres and artists manifesting an immense history, rich with heritage and tradition and those that influence contemporary expressions. The building features a multitude of exhibition spaces, open and semi-open, an auditorium and a cafe. Designed to articulate its purpose, the building's narrative boldly communicates its intent.

KK: How does Archohm approach designing homes that bring a sense of calm to modern Indian families, and what project best illustrates this philosophy?

KS: Being minimal is a true luxury in today's world of stress. In the current context of India, residential dwellings have done more harm to Indian urbanity than any other building typology. Every inch of ground is maximised, irrespective of the need, as if most houses are built for the envy of the neighbour. However, primarily, residences also reflect the aspirations of India's modern society today—families who wish to be together yet crave a sense of personal space, who are rooted in India but hold a global perspective, and who strive for the difficult balance between intimacy and independence. The architecture of family homes epitomises this essence. Every family member bears ownership and is represented through space-making and experience design yet aligns with a common whole. Therefore, a 'neutral' stance is taken to cater to different personalities across generations. The response is deliberately designing spaces with sensory deprivation—a breather for the dwellers and a visual oasis for the city where buildings are at peace. The LIT House embodies the concept of a 'forest in outer skin, walls made of glass,' realised through a design approach. This innovative design integrates traditional courtyard principles into a contemporary context, creating a seamless connection with the expansive plot. Two floating concrete slabs define the structure, housing a diverse array of programs within their volumetric interplay. The juxtaposition of introverted austerity with interconnected openness showcases a state-of-the-art architectural symbiosis. Materiality and spatial expression blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, from forests to glass, while glass boxes encasing the residence add a layer of intrigue to the design narrative.



With two existing Dilli Haats in Delhi, the design of Dilli Haat Janakpuri required a fresh perspective that questioned conventional elements while staying true to its fundamental purpose—bridging the gap between artisans and urban dwellers by eliminating intermediaries. The master plan incorporates an 800-seat indoor auditorium for formal performances and an open-air amphitheater for informal gatherings; ***Photograph by Andre J Fanthome***

Team Archohm thrives on a restless spirit—dreaming big, adapting fearlessly, and infusing every challenge with grit, joy, and a relentless drive to make a difference

Kunal Savarkar
Photography: Harris George Stephen
Assistant Photographer: Neelanchal Gupta
Art Direction: Sourabh Gupta, Akanksha Thapa, Harris George Stephen, Neelanchal Gupta

KK: What principles guided the Patna Riverfront Development to integrate the river as a key stakeholder in urban revitalization?
SG: Riverfronts in India elevate significance, as their expansion seamlessly integrates with both the city's natural and urban elements. Originally conceived to install sculptures along JP Ganga Path, the project now seeks to uplift the riverfront ecosystem and introduce new programs to revitalize the riverside. By integrating the Ganga River into the city fabric, the project aims to create a 'live' edge celebrating the recreational and traditional aspects of Patna. Therefore, the project's intent is to develop the riverfront as an active green urban edge that celebrates the city, and its culture. An integrated master plan, tailored to the context and stakeholder input, has been proposed to create an active, large park, or "Samagra Udyan," with various elements seamlessly integrated.

The Patna Riverfront project attempts to set a benchmark in riverfront development in India, where the primary stakeholder of the project is the river itself. Most riverfronts have evolved into vibrant centres of recreation, tourism, and economic activities for social, cultural, and religious gatherings in modern cities, often neglecting the river. It has now become urgent to prioritise environmental sustainability and ecological considerations in such projects. The riverbank is fluid and dynamic in nature, hardscaping the same, detrimentally harms the coast, its ecology and marine life. With this mentality, the project aims to rejuvenate not just the urban life of the city of Patna, but also the natural ecosystem by creating a large green park on the river edge providing sustainable recreational and cultural activities, organizing informal businesses, sports and designing better public spaces with creative amenities. The ratio of built interventions to the open spaces will be 5:95 to impose minimum to no destruction to the existing stakeholders.

KK: Mridu, With the rise of digital tools and AI in design, how do you envision Archohm adapting to or leading these technological shifts?
MS: Since we run a design school and an architecture practice simultaneously, we are constantly asking ourselves these questions. Where do our ethics lie? Is it ethical for creators to make platforms like Instagram extremely addictive? Is it ethical to use apparently hi-tech materials like glass and aluminum excessively in our climate and country?

To what degree can one use technology? The way we use technology should not make us stupid as a species. However, I always quote Leon C. Megginson, a professor who states "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change," Therefore, the future belongs to the most adaptable person.

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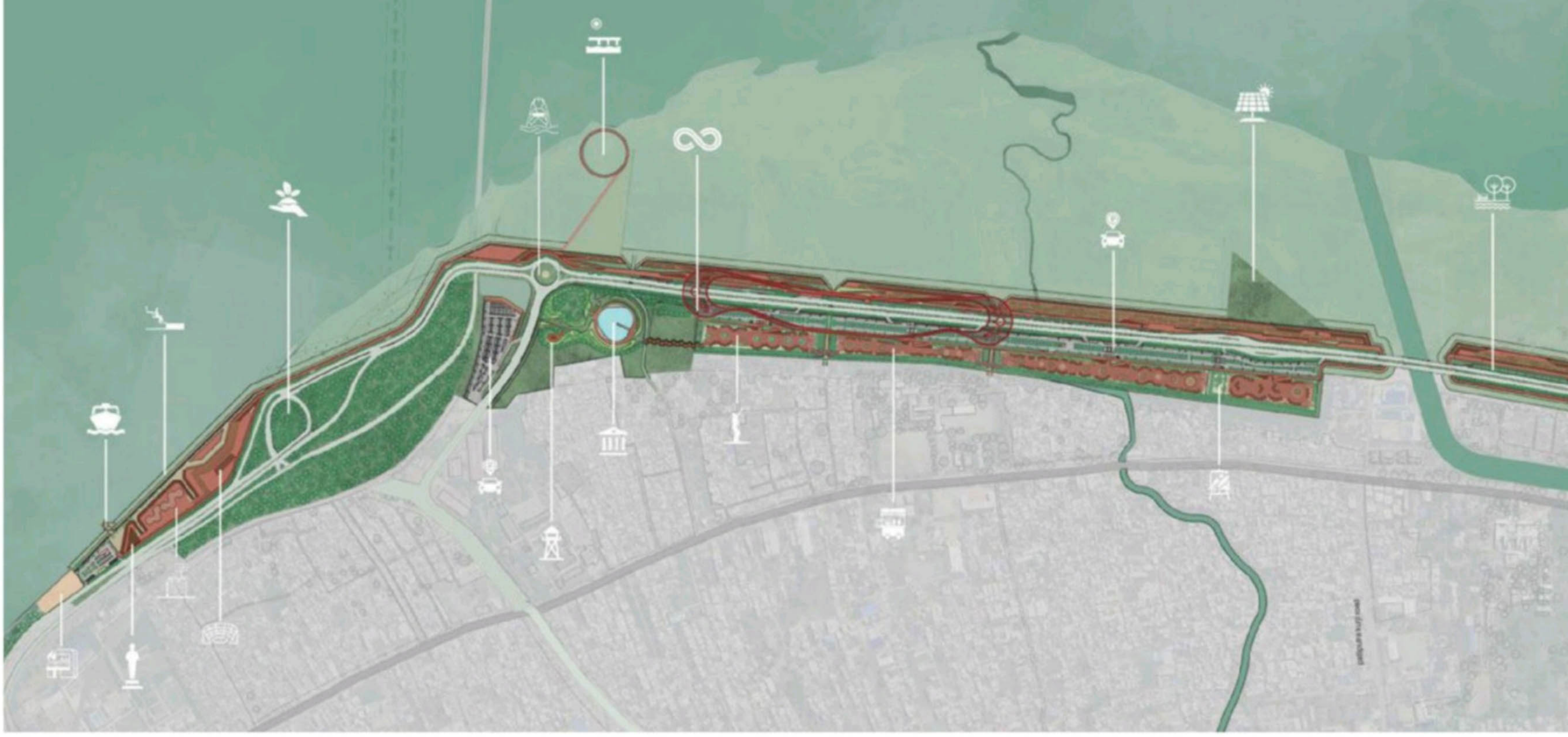
> *The metro stations commissioned by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) are designed with a variety of details to give a visually calm infrastructure oasis to the city. The idea was to conceive a system that could adapt to the constraints of the context, without compromising on the identity of the station."*
>
> —**KUNAL SAVARKAR,** *Archohm*

Designed for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), the Mumbai Metro stations offer a refined infrastructure experience amidst the city's dense urban fabric. Prioritising functionality without compromising identity, the design adapts to site constraints while maintaining a cohesive visual language; *Photographs by Noughts & Crosses*



The Patna Riverfront Development project reimagines the Ganga riverfront as an integral part of the city's urban and ecological fabric. Originally envisioned as a sculpture installation along JP Ganga Path, the initiative has evolved into a comprehensive effort to revitalise the riverfront ecosystem

We attempt using tech tools to study sustainability and performance of our projects. We try to look at the best software to model and monitor our technical construction.

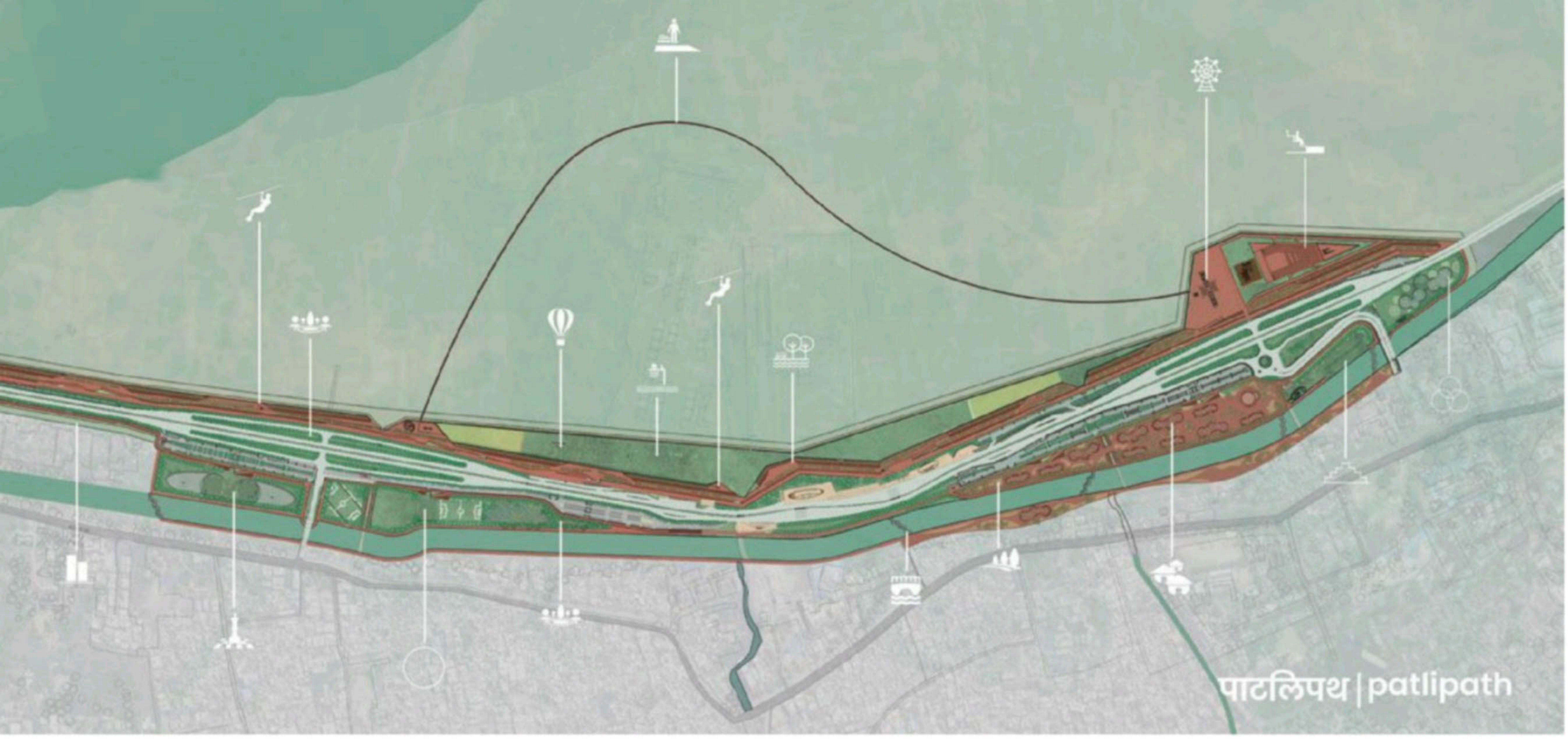
Currently, we do a lot of public work, we are constantly pitching ideas to governments/corporate/stakeholders and under excruciating timelines. We use generative AI for our business development efforts to quickly and effectively communicate the vision we want to share for a city, a neighbourhood. AI comes in very handy in such situations, it is a quick tool to inspire the onlooker to get our point across.

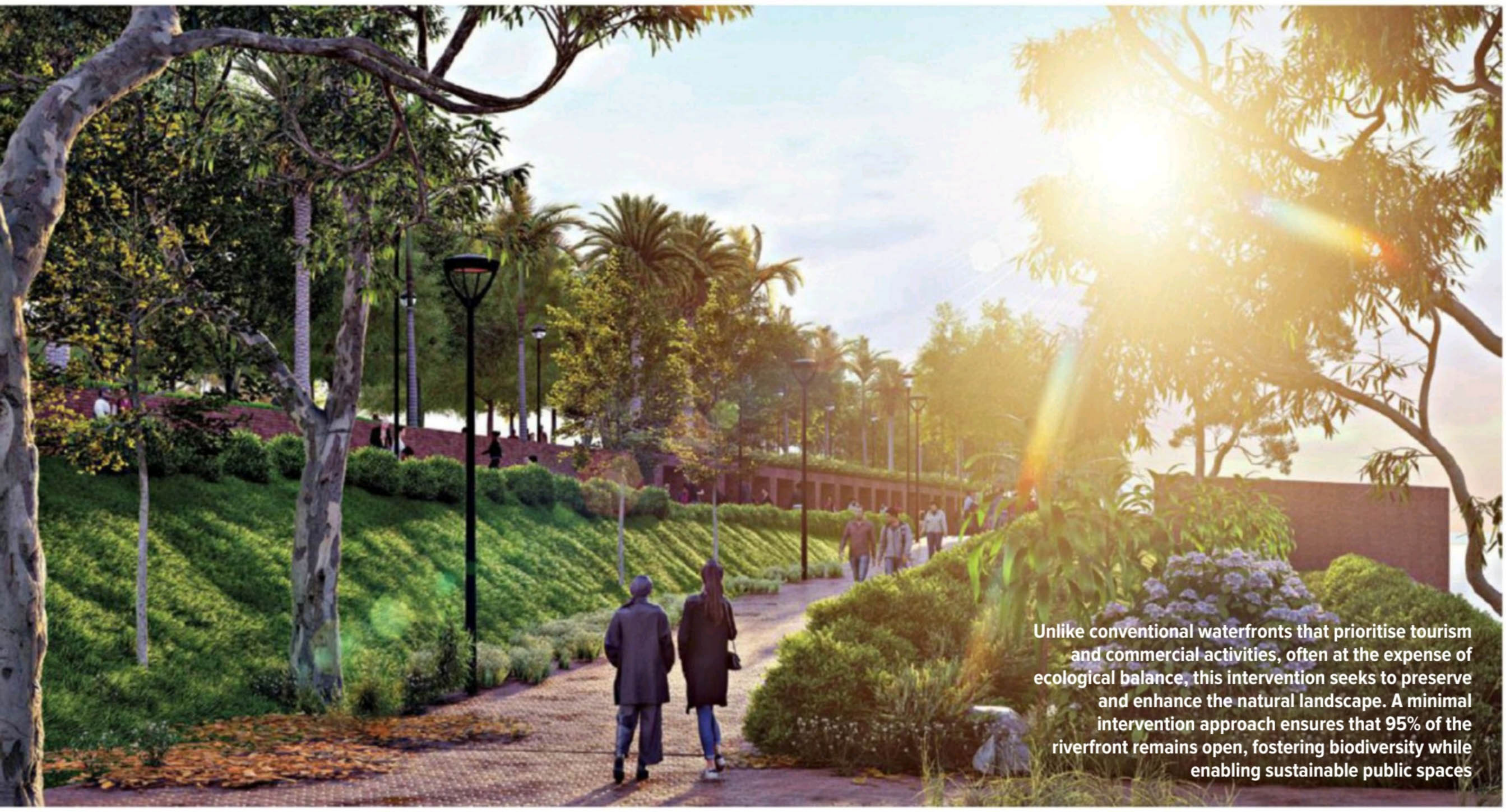
KK: Kunal What excites you most about Archohm's future, and how do you see your generation influencing its trajectory?

KS: The single thing that excites me most is the young energy in Archohm. It's like King Arthur's Camelot in that sense. In the twinkling of an eye, we are 25, and yet it feels like we are just starting. Our generation will learn, and teach, hopefully in that order, those for whom design comes first always and forever. We will continue to dream, and build, and create, and hope to leave this world a better place than what we came upon.

KK: Sourabh, as you cross the 25-year mark, what's next for Archohm? Are there new frontiers—geographic, typological, or technological—that you're eager to explore?

SG: Water is life. Most cities in the world thrive on rivers. Certainly, most Indian cities owe their existence, their 'raison d'etre' to this reality. With time, and with the 'evolution' of our society, we have



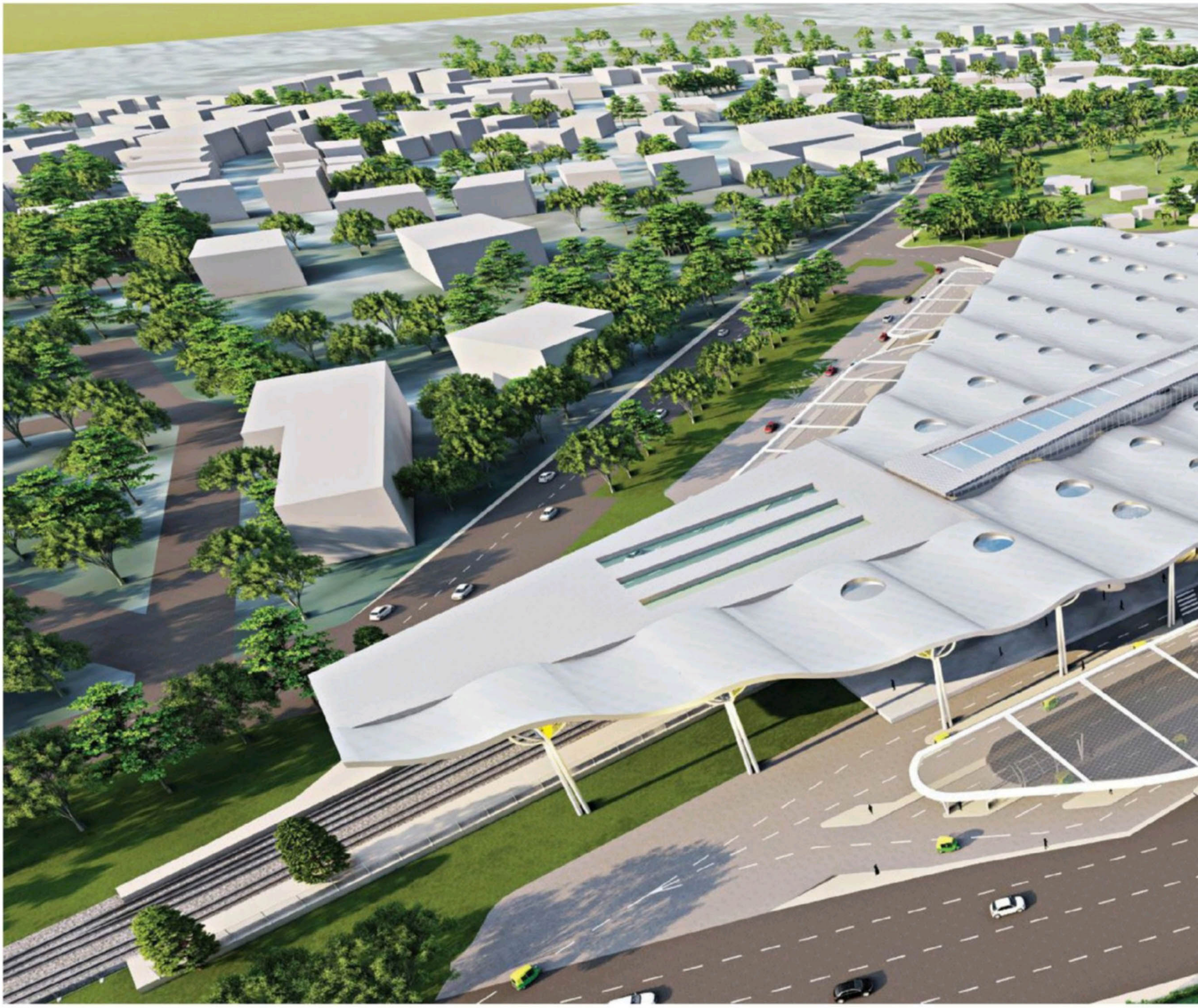

Unlike conventional waterfronts that prioritise tourism and commercial activities, often at the expense of ecological balance, this intervention seeks to preserve and enhance the natural landscape. A minimal intervention approach ensures that 95% of the riverfront remains open, fostering biodiversity while enabling sustainable public spaces

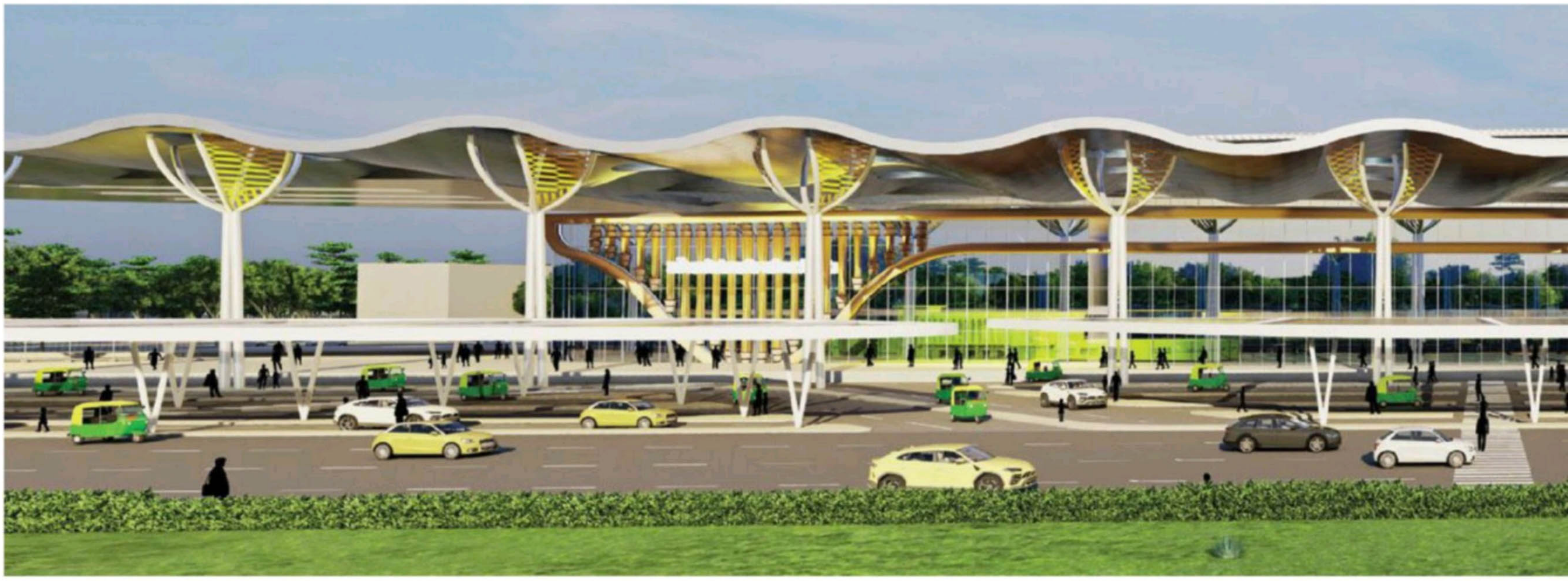
converted all our rivers to sewage. We have turned our backs on them, in every which way. I would really like Archohm to engage with the development of cities and their riverfronts to bring back the lost glory. Glory of nature and its real 'green rated' sustainable environments. Riverbanks can be home to all new developments, in people, programs and projects. We need to revive not only the water and the microclimate around it, but also our cultural institutions and public spaces with it too, which in turn will develop our next generation.

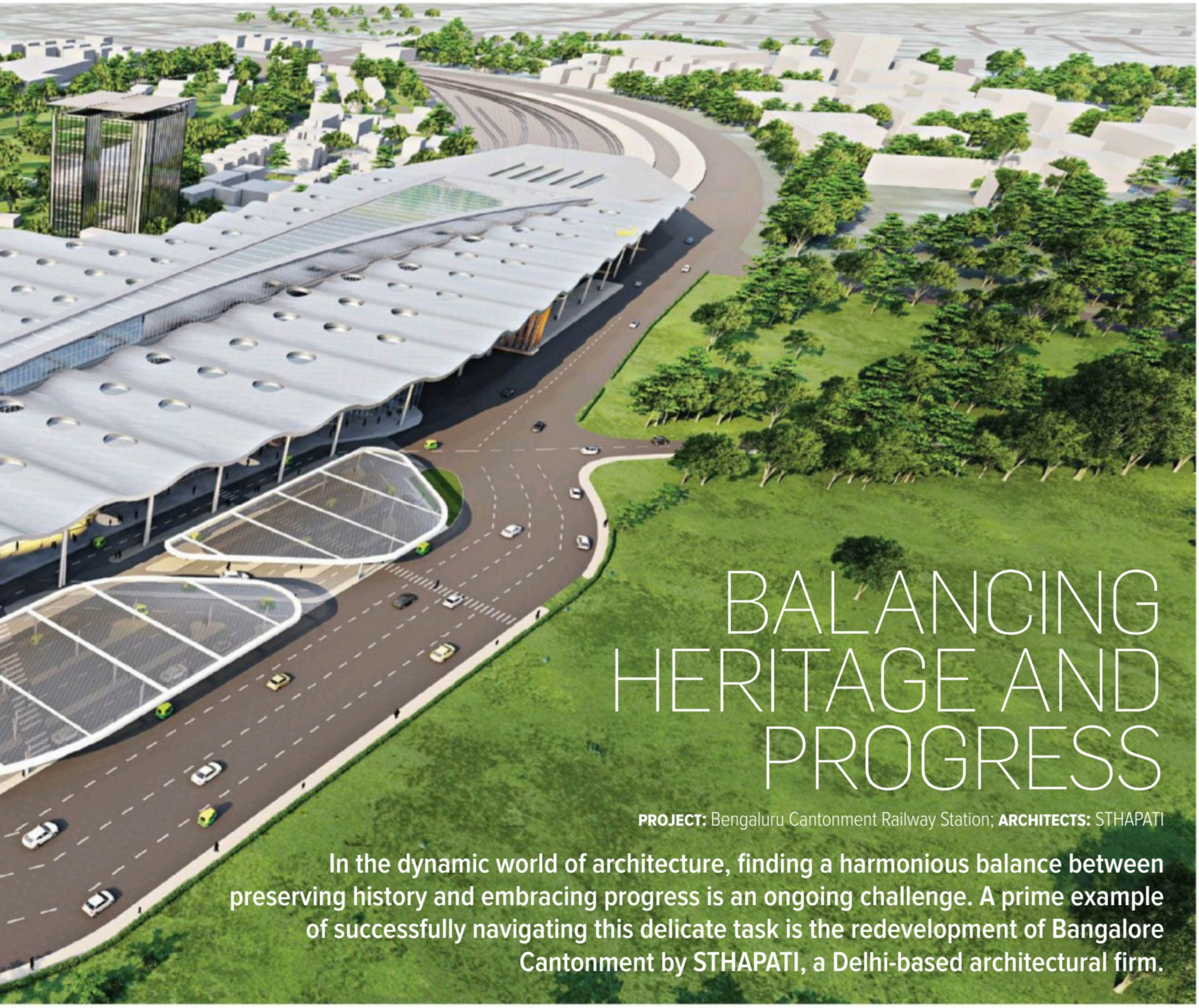
Riverfronts have to be the new living rooms to our cities.

KK: Finally, if you could dream up one ambitious project to define Archohm's next 25 years—what would it be, and why?

SG: I think design and architecture are in a unique position to read cities and societies. The understanding needed in sociology, psychology, and philosophy gives us an incredible tool to 'design' everything every day. It informs us of the choices being made and the directions being taken by a generation. Archohm would like to take this as an opportunity and an obligation to make the world a better place. One needs to teach and learn. Learn new meanings and teach new methods to live a life through design. We need to make every choice in material and manifestation more carefully and meaningfully. We need to make our built environment more responsive and responsible. As we say, architecture is a testimony of the culture of a society in time, it is a reflection of our collective state of mind. Archohm would like to address that architecture.



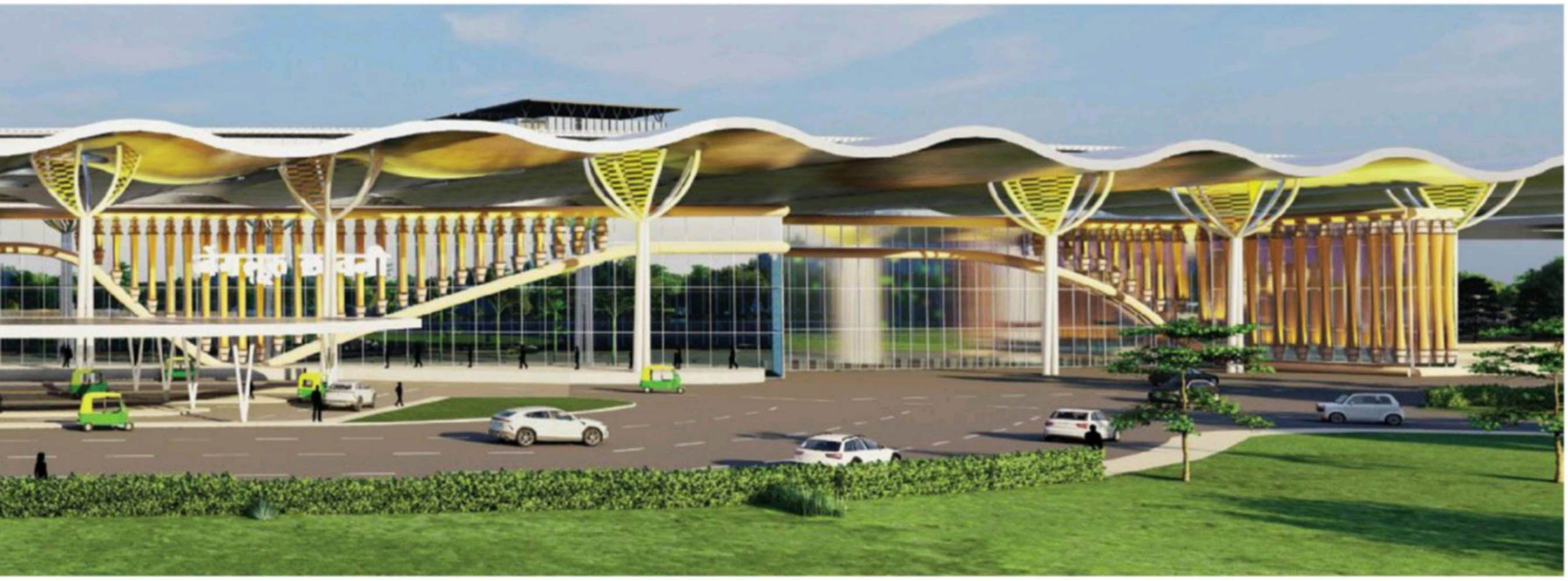


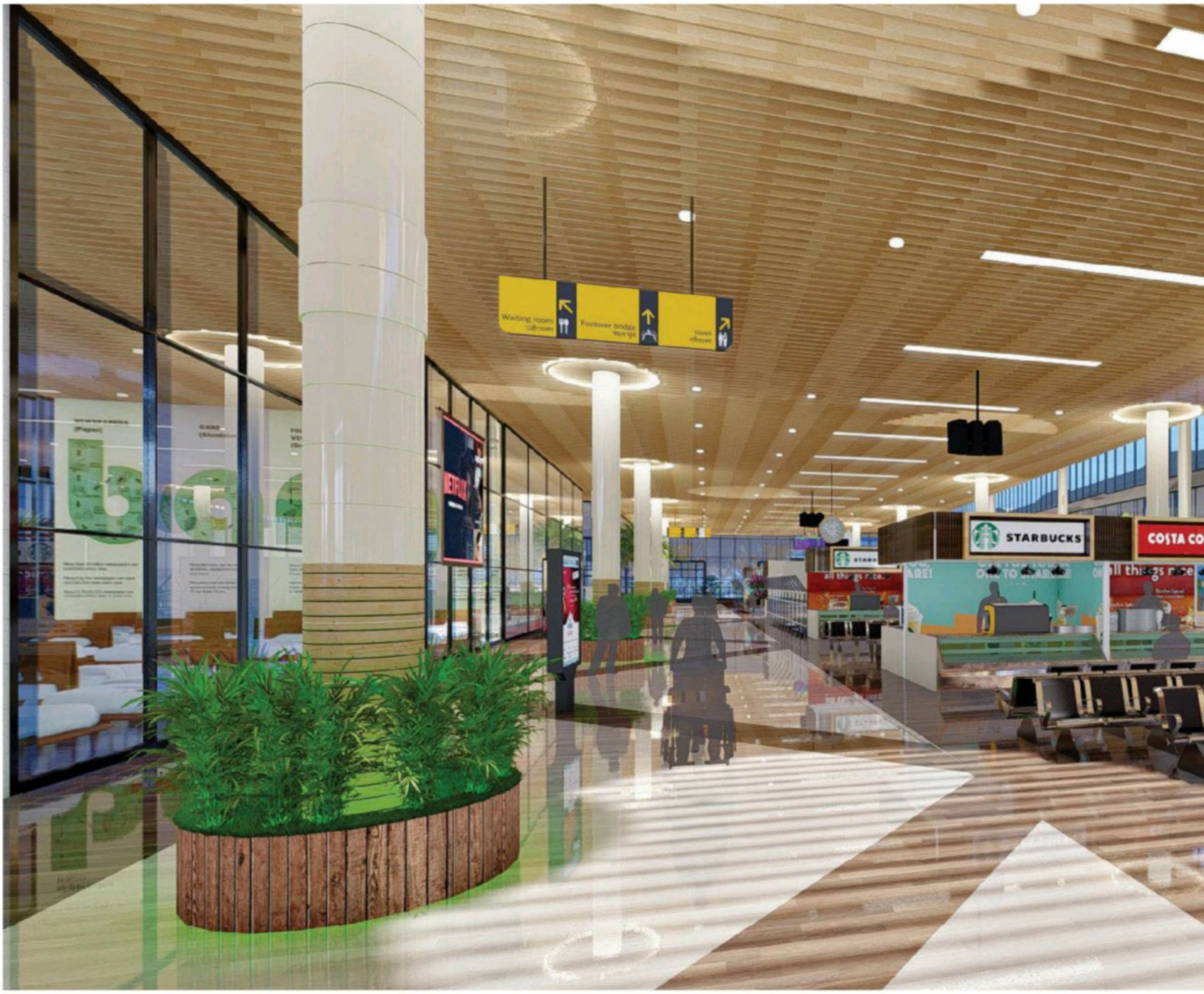


BALANCING HERITAGE AND PROGRESS

PROJECT: Bengaluru Cantonment Railway Station; **ARCHITECTS:** STHAPATI

In the dynamic world of architecture, finding a harmonious balance between preserving history and embracing progress is an ongoing challenge. A prime example of successfully navigating this delicate task is the redevelopment of Bangalore Cantonment by STHAPATI, a Delhi-based architectural firm.





The designing of public spaces is a multifaceted endeavor, necessitating the consideration of numerous variables that influence design decisions. The historical context, cultural and heritage significance, demographic characteristics, as well as aesthetic, safety, and functional requirements, all converge to form a complex matrix that designers must navigate. This intricate interplay of factors renders the design of public spaces a formidable challenge. The redevelopment of Bangalore Cantonment Station exemplifies a successful approach to this delicate task. Here, meticulous restoration safeguards the Grade 2 listed building while seamlessly integrating new structures with modern amenities. This innovative strategy ensures the station continues to serve the community while retaining its significant heritage value.

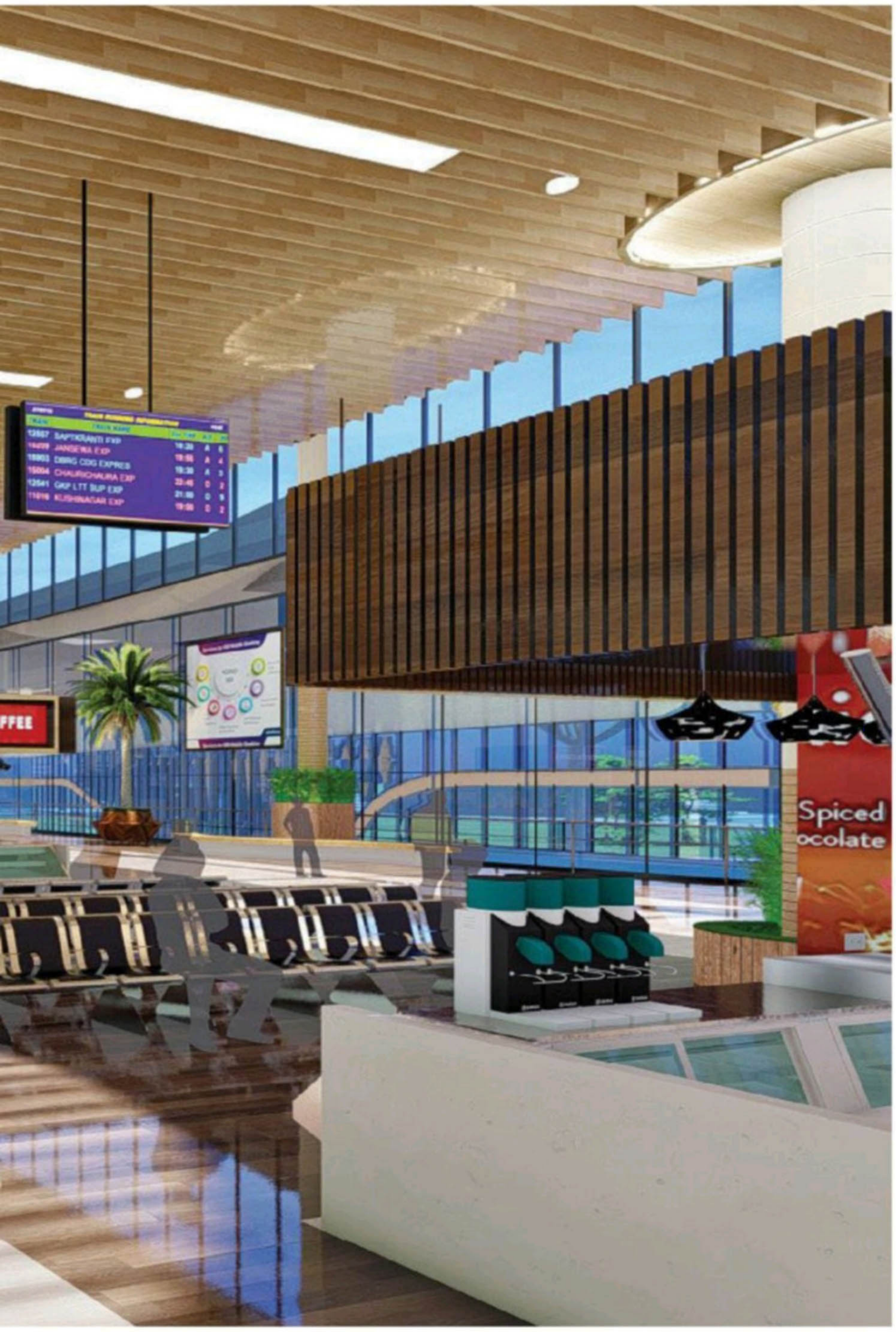
THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

The first phase of the project brings to life a majestic station building, meticulously restored to its former glory, and crowned with an iconic mega roof. According to Harsh Varshneya of STHAPATI, the design is deeply rooted in Bangalore's rich cultural heritage. The station's supporting columns feature intricate floral motifs, paying homage to the city's "Garden City" legacy. The facade also subtly nods to Karnataka's musical traditions, incorporating elements reminiscent of the sitar. This thoughtful blend of art and architecture fosters a strong sense of cultural identity, ensuring the revitalized station is a true reflection of its surroundings.

The architect highlights the significance of modern transportation hubs in driving urban mobility and economic growth, emphasising that their design must prioritise environmental sustainability and passenger well-being. The Bangalore Cantonment Station project exemplifies this approach, harmoniously integrating historical preservation with cutting-edge design. By bridging the past and present, this project sets a precedent for future developments, showcasing the transformative potential of thoughtful design in creating thriving, eco-friendly transportation hubs.

A HOLISTIC DESIGN APPROACH

The redevelopment of Bangalore Cantonment Station prioritises two



aspects – sustainability and passenger comfort. The project incorporates sustainable infrastructure practices to minimise environmental impact. Additionally, the design prioritises passenger experience by integrating modern amenities, improved flow, and accessibility features. This holistic approach ensures the station functions efficiently and creates a comfortable and welcoming environment for travellers.

Drawing inspiration from Bangalore's natural beauty, the station's design incorporates elements reminiscent of its lush landscapes. Furthermore, the integration of cultural references fosters a sense of place and connection for both residents and visitors. sensitivity.

BRIDGING THE PAST AND FUTURE

The redevelopment of Bangalore Cantonment Station is not just about upgrading infrastructure; it's about creating a bridge between the past and the future. By preserving historical elements and integrating modern amenities, we ensure that our architectural heritage is honoured while meeting contemporary needs. This project stands as a testament to the fact that with thoughtful design and strategic planning, it is possible to create spaces that respect history, serve the present, and inspire the future.

VIPUL B VARSHNEYA

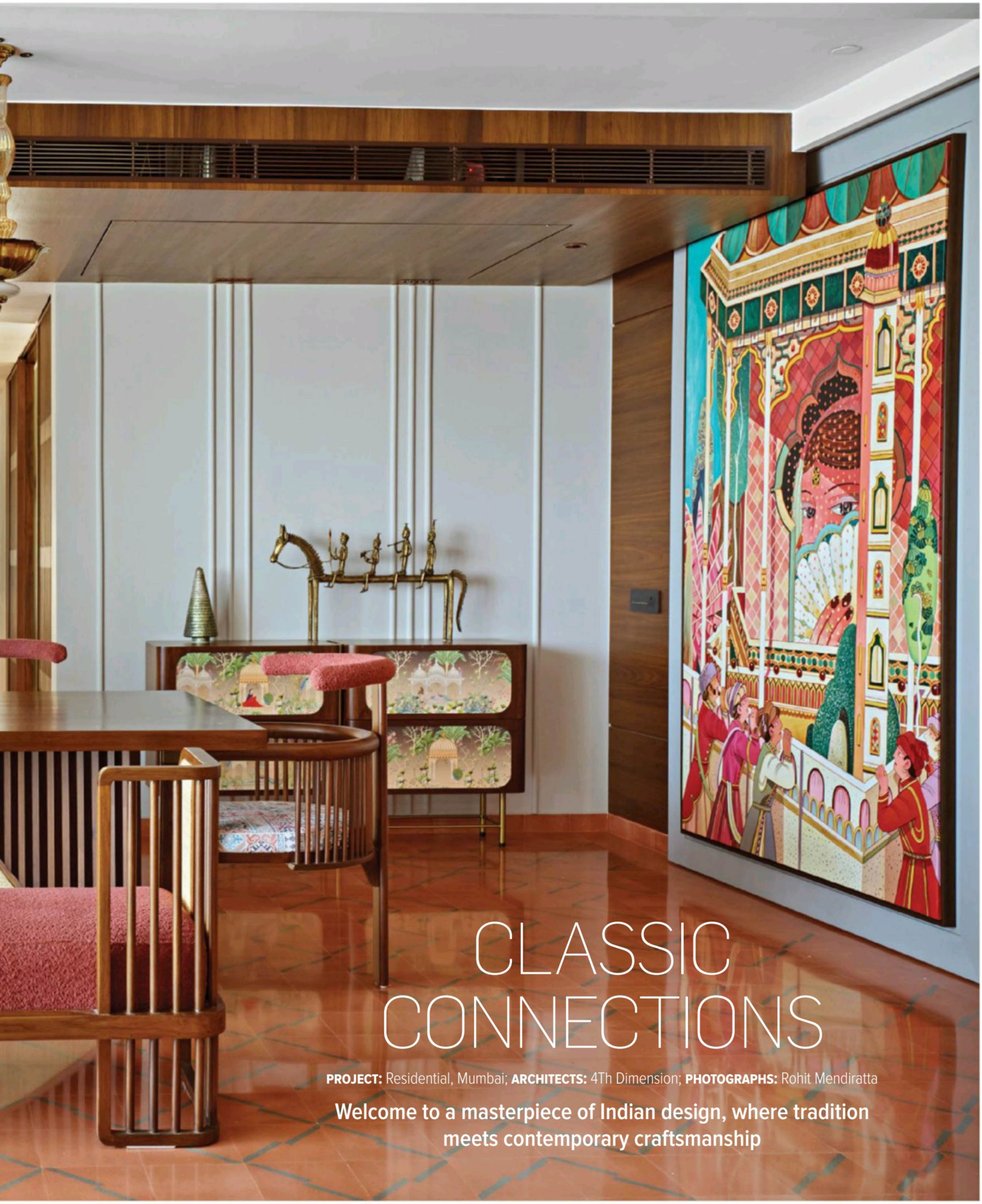
Director - Chief Architect, STHAPATI

With Masters in Urban Planning, Architect Vipul B Varshney's stellar vitae says it all- From being a Professor-Design Chair at University to designing & executing some of India's most renowned projects –resettlement of Bhuj after earthquake to designing India's highest altitude airport, a township outside Mumbai for an urban diaspara to Government Buildings and Hospitals, this multi-talented architect's portfolio covers a wide range of projects in India as well as Mauritius. An awardee from Government and various organizations including Heritage Award from U.P Govt at Ganj Carnival, U.P. Ratan 2013, Shakti Samman 2015 from Governor U.P, awardee of A3 International Foundation –Excellence in Architectural Journalism 2016, Women of the year-2004" award in creative field by Sahara welfare foundation. She has almost 25 awards in her possession till now.

HARSH VARSHNEYA

Principal Architect, STHAPATI

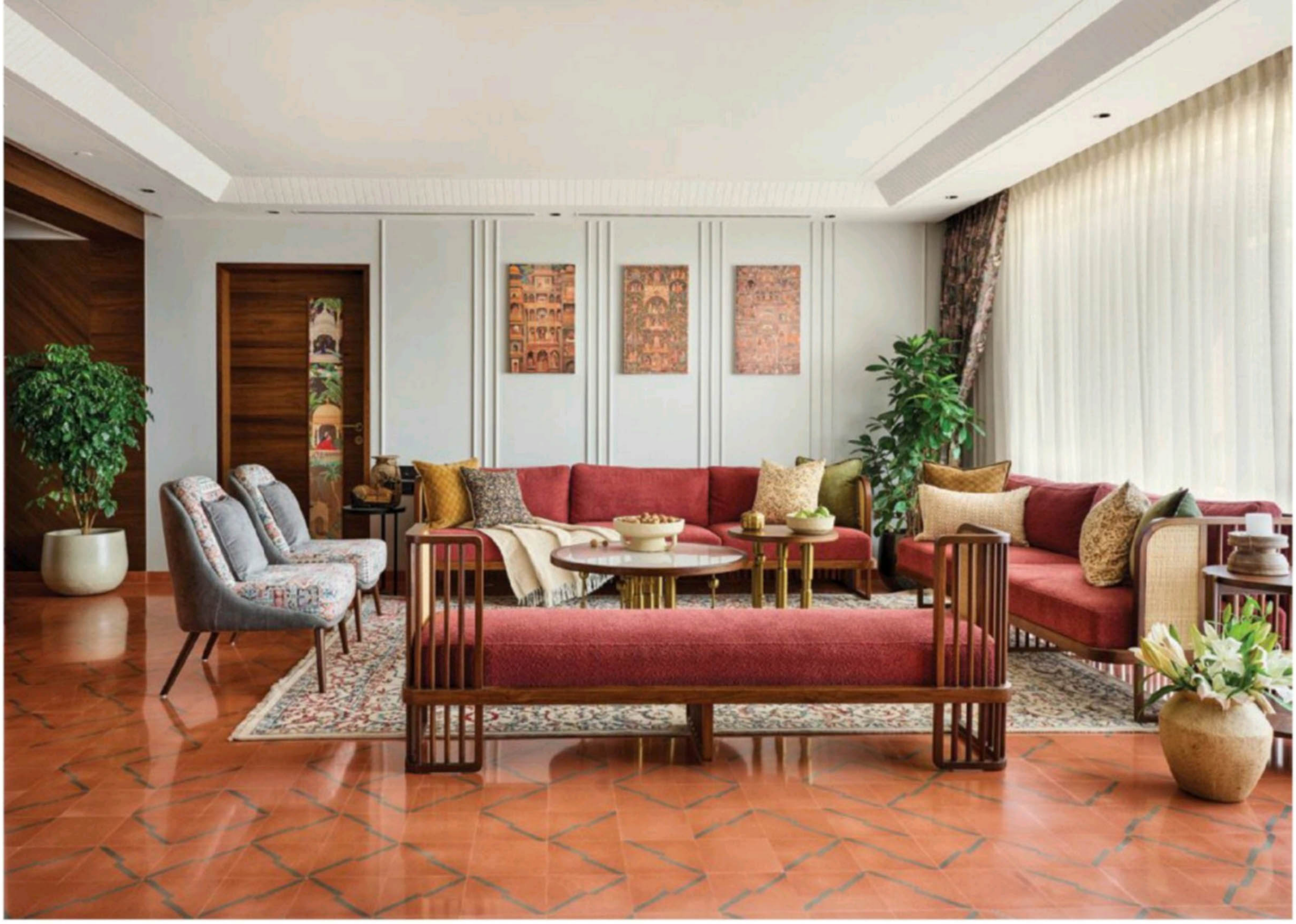
Harsh Varshneya is the Director and Head of Design at STHAPATI, an award-winning multidisciplinary architectural practice headquartered in Lucknow & Delhi. Their globally recognised portfolio spans a spectrum of building typologies, from individual dwellings to large-scale urban developments Harsh graduated as a triple Gold medallist from the prestigious Sushant School of Art and Architecture in Gurugram, marking the beginning of a remarkable journey in architecture and design. His pursuit of excellence led him to the world-renowned University of Nottingham, where he received his master's in sustainable tall buildings, accredited to CTBUH, Chicago.



CLASSIC CONNECTIONS

PROJECT: Residential, Mumbai; **ARCHITECTS:** 4Th Dimension; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Rohit Mendiratta

Welcome to a masterpiece of Indian design, where tradition meets contemporary craftsmanship



> “Our client’s vision was to create a warm, peaceful, and timeless home that would be admired for years to come. They desired a space that embodied simplicity with a touch of traditional elegance, tailored to accommodate a family of six, including the couple, their children, and parents.”
> —**MIHIR KOTAK**, *Co-Founder, 4th Dimension*

This home seamlessly merges modern sensibilities with the warmth of traditional culture, striking a captivating balance between two distinct worlds. The space remains deeply rooted in its heritage, reflecting the values and identity of its owners. This stunning home, crafted by Mumbai’s 4th Dimension, embodies the evolving design landscape of India, where traditional influences meet modern creativity and innovation.

THE DESIGN BRIEF

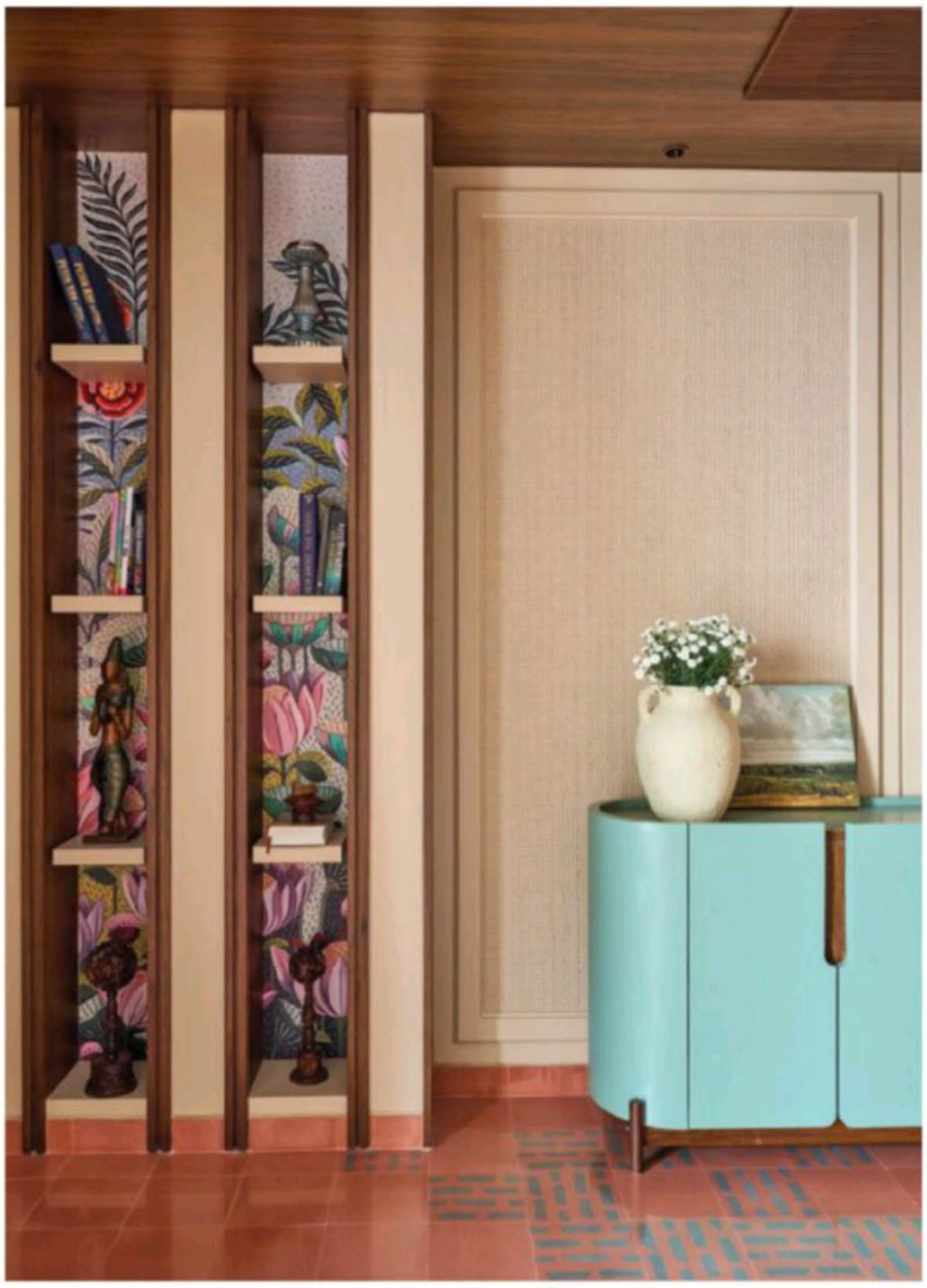
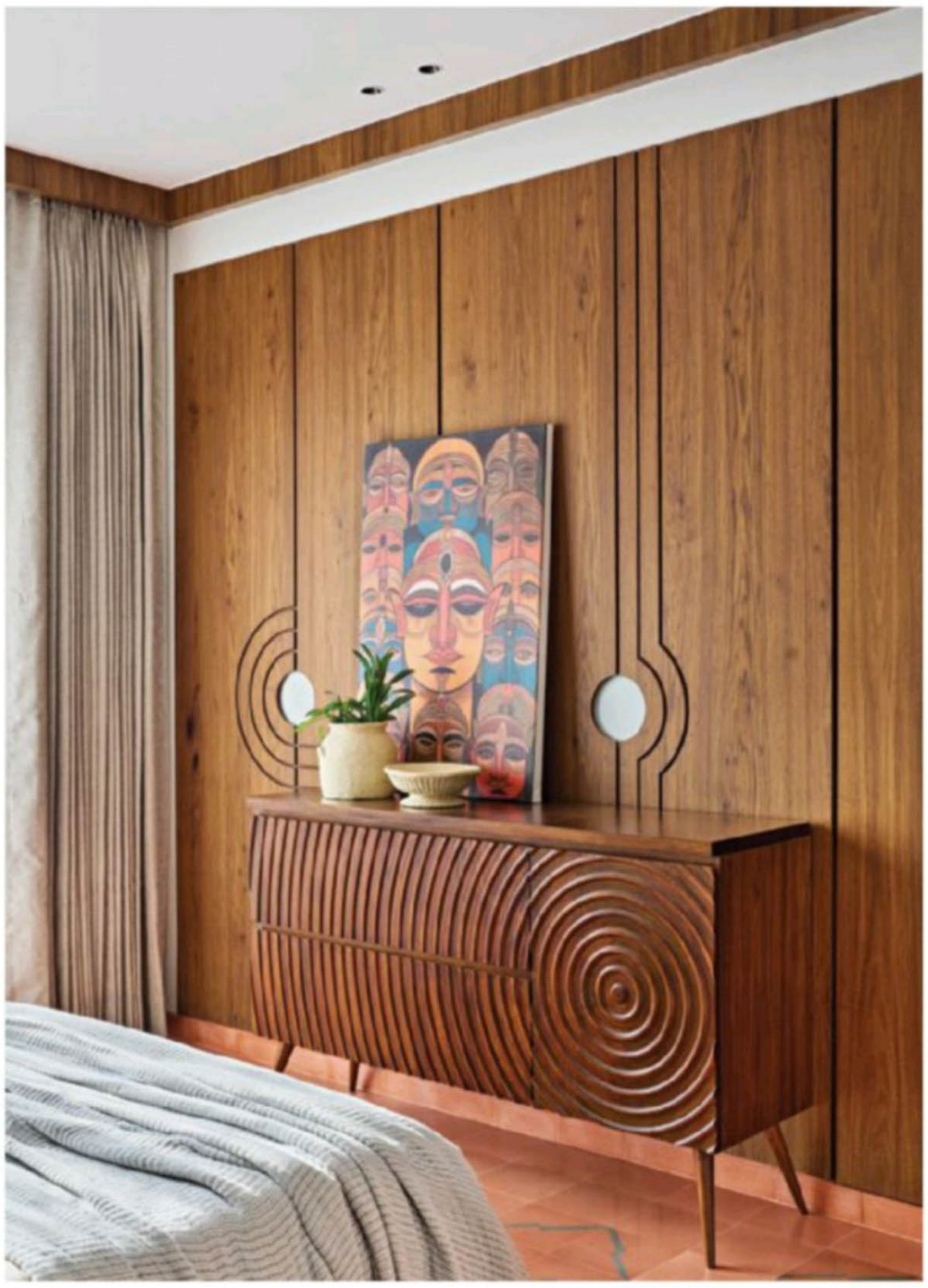
Each element of the design tells a story of Indian artistry. From the intricate handmade details to the self-designed features, this residence reflects an ethos of authenticity. “Our client’s vision was to create a warm, peaceful, and timeless home that would be admired for years to come. They desired a space that embodied simplicity with a touch of traditional elegance, tailored to accommodate a family of six, including the couple, their children, and parents,” says Mihir Kotak, Co-Founder, 4th Dimension. In response, the architects Rinki and Mihir, envisioned a décor that seamlessly integrated Indian elements, evoking a sense of nostalgia and connection to the past. “By incorporating traditional touches, we aimed to craft a space that not only honors its roots but also becomes a timeless haven,” adds Rinki Kotak.

A CULTURAL OASIS

The home’s elegant lobby sets the tone for a sophisticated and culturally rich experience. The space is adorned with traditional Indian Thikri art, while a unique metal signage welcomes visitors. The main door features a stunning Haveli-inspired metal double-door design, clad in warm veneer.

Upon entering, a small foyer greets guests, topped with a beautifully crafted metal art piece. This intimate space flows effortlessly into the expansive living room, which boasts an attached balcony. The living area is furnished with exquisite, handmade pieces crafted from reclaimed wood, complemented by vibrant tapestries featuring heritage and ethnic prints.

The balcony offers a charming Indian-style baithak seating area, complete with a textured wall featuring a captivating story. This thoughtful design element adds depth and character to the space, creating a unique cultural oasis that invites relaxation and contemplation.

> “We aimed to evoke a sense of nostalgia through our design, incorporating artworks, culture, and Indian craftsmanship. By subtly weaving these elements together, we drew inspiration from the past, creating a space that feels timeless and deeply rooted in tradition.”
>
> —**RINKI KOTAK**, *Co-Founder, 4th Dimension*

SEAMLESS FLAIR

The printed floor showcases traditional patterns in a kaleidoscope of colours, while the cement floor guides the flow of the space with its lines and patterns. The daughter’s room is a customised haven, designed with her needs and inputs in mind, featuring a touch of teenage flair. The showstopper here is the pink onyx bathroom.

One of the most striking features of the home is the incorporation of Indian and Mughal history through paintings and prints on each bedroom door, adding a unique cultural touch. The corridor leads to a charming study nook, adorned with Sabyasachi wallpapers that create a sophisticated ambiance. A jali sliding door adds an extra layer of visual interest, casting intricate designs and shadows in the sunlight.

The master bedroom boasts a panelled look with cane and moulds, keeping traditional formats alive. A lavish walk-in wardrobe leads to a stunning white marble inlayed washroom, complete with a luxurious bathtub - an iconic symbol of luxury. The parents’ room is a peaceful retreat, featuring intricately carved Kota stone with scooping patterns and veneer accents for added warmth and balance.

“We aimed to evoke a sense of nostalgia through our design, incorporating artworks, culture, and Indian craftsmanship. By subtly weaving these elements together, we drew inspiration from the past, creating a space that feels timeless and deeply rooted in tradition. This thoughtful blend of old and new is what led us to this project ‘TIMELESS ROOTS’,” concludes Rinki. ✚

FACTFILE

Type: Residential; **Location:** Thane, Mumbai; **Design Firm:** 4Th Dimension
Principal Designers/Architects: Arch Mihir Kotak n Arch Rinki Kotak
Design Team: Manali Bhambere, Manasvi Patel, Ziya Shaikh; **Area:** 2750 Sq ft

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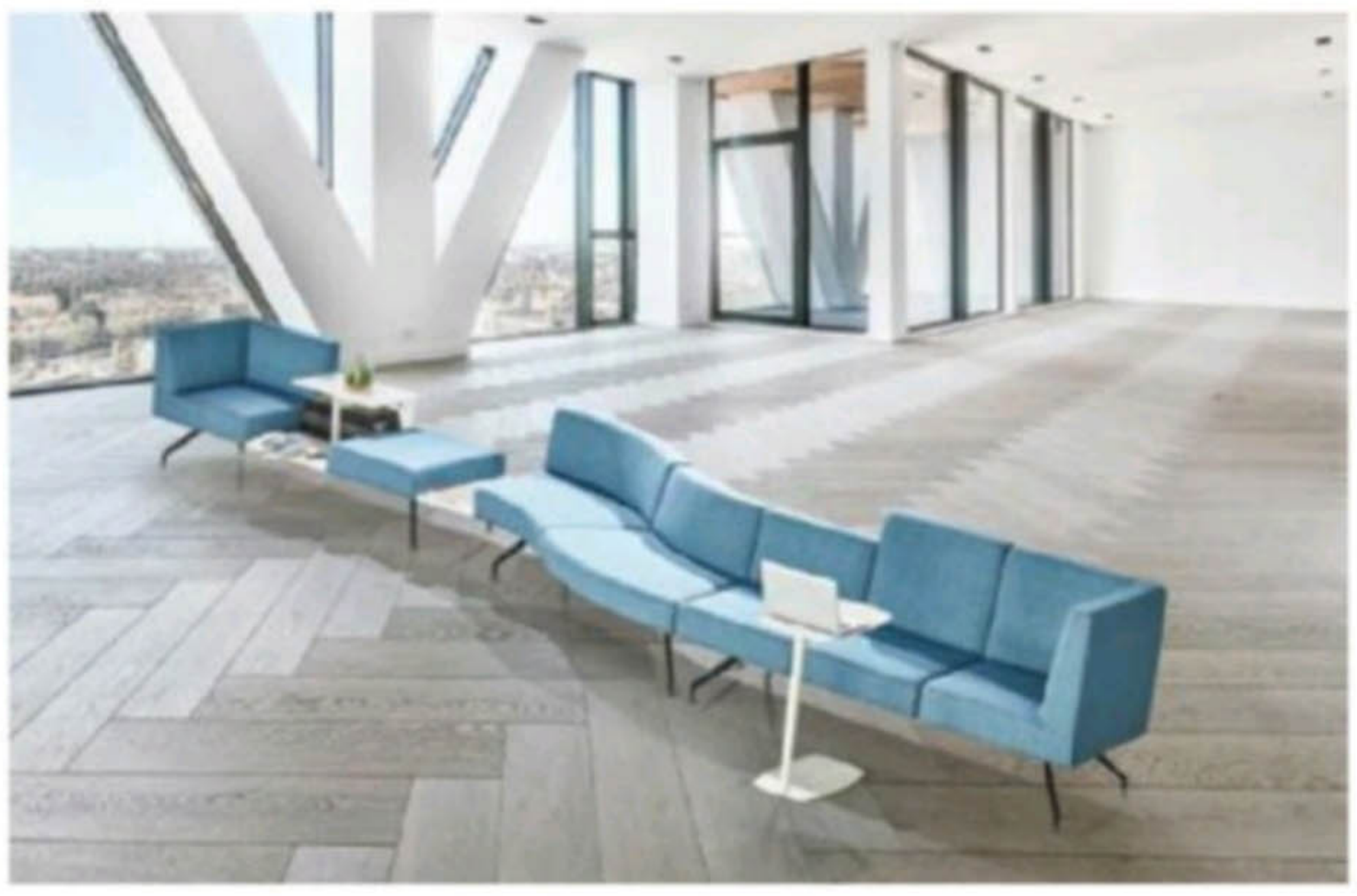

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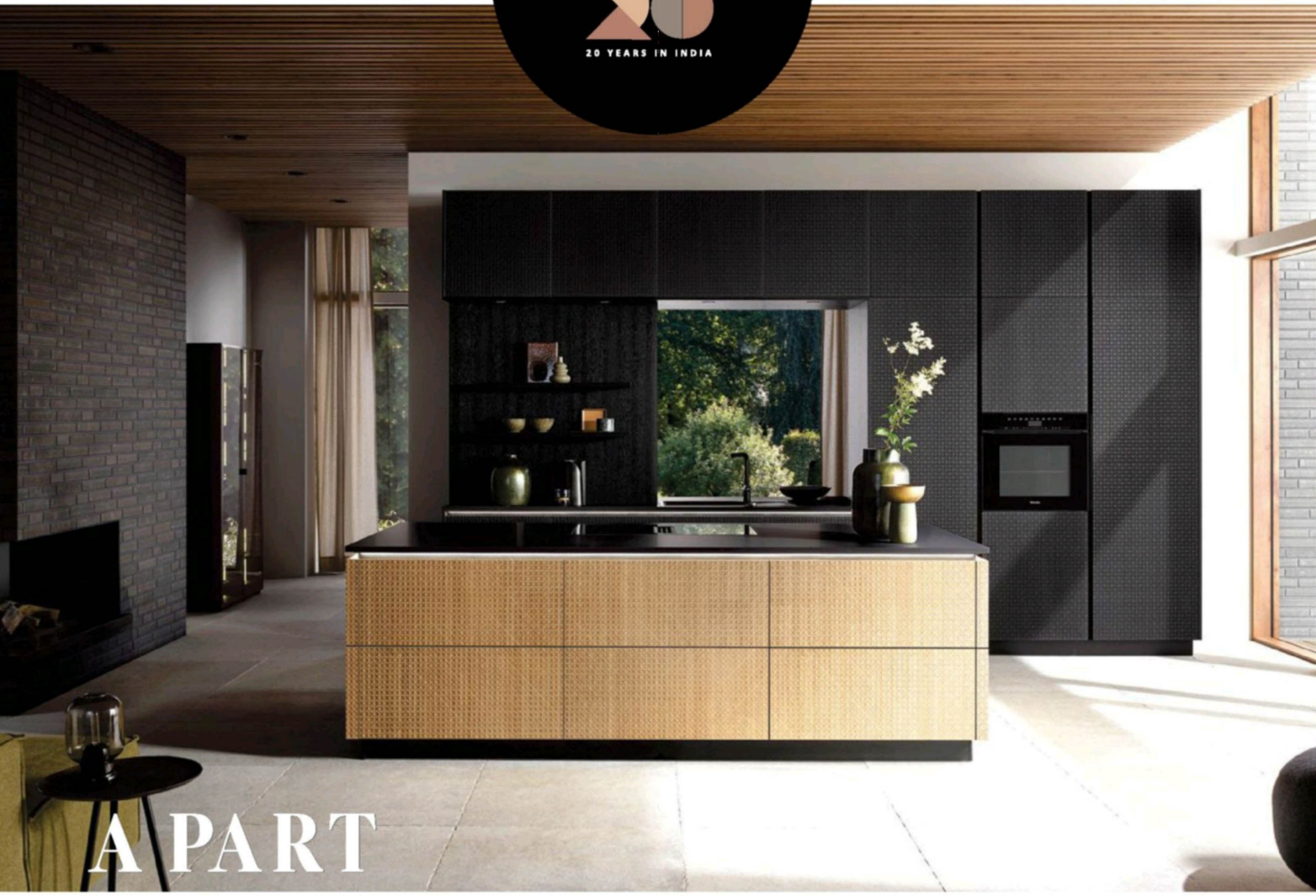

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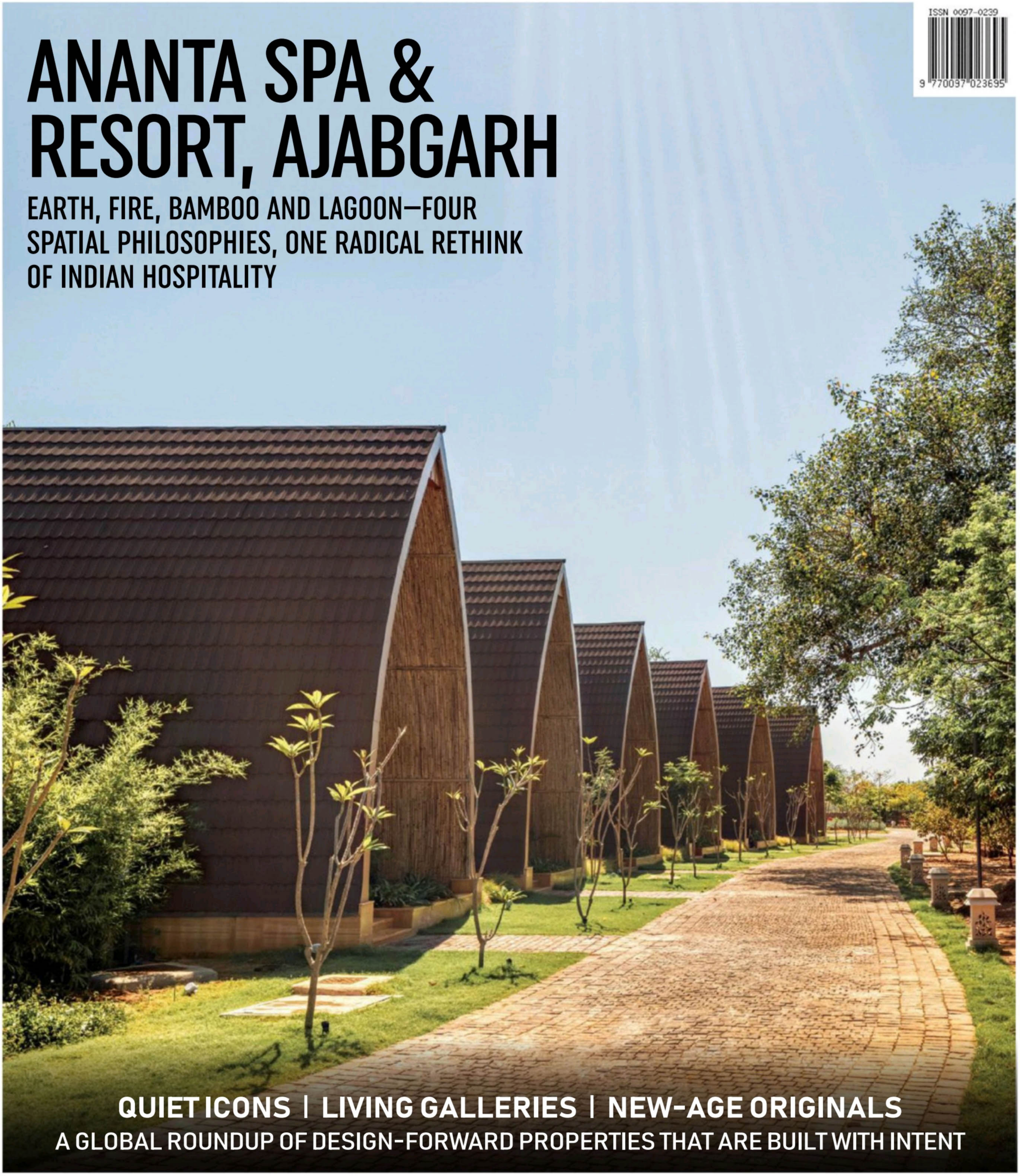

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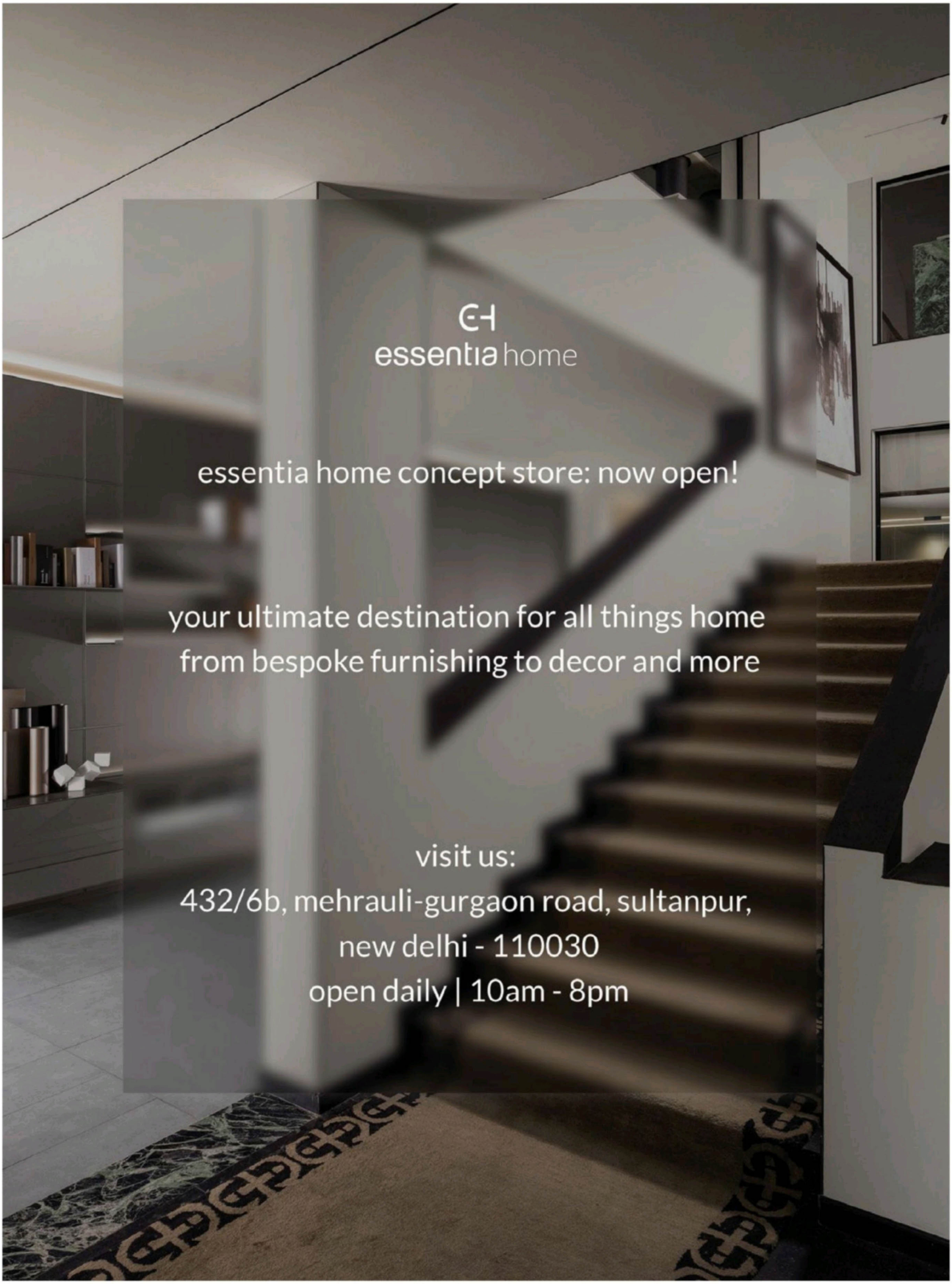

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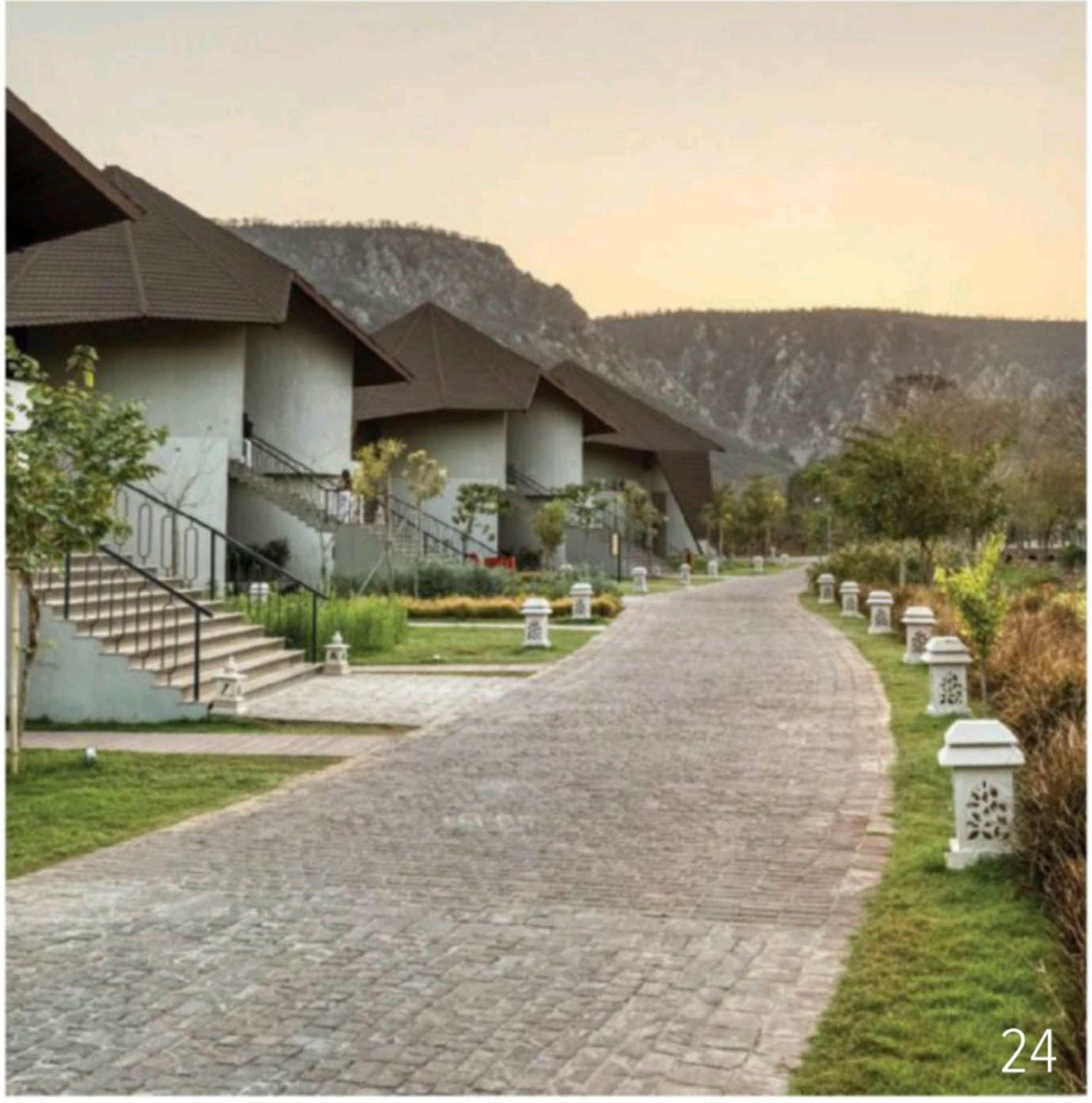

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"Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness."
—FRANK GHERY

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A GLOBAL ROUNDUP OF DESIGN-FORWARD PROPERTIES THAT ARE BUILT WITH INTENT

As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, architecture and design plays a crucial role in shaping memorable experiences. From luxurious resorts to boutique hotels, from wellness getaways, and glamping destinations to business hotels, thoughtful design can elevate the guest experience, foster brand identity, and drive business success. In this special supplement, we explore the latest trends, innovative designs, and expert insights that are redefining the hospitality landscape in India and globally.

Our cover feature showcases Ananta Spa and Resort in Ajabgarh, where nature-inspired design takes center stage. The resort's architecture is rooted in four elements - Earth, Water, Bamboo, and Fire - offering a refreshing departure from Rajasthan's typical Mughal-inspired style. Designed by Architect Kush Shah, Ananta Ajabgarh is a masterclass in understated elegance and thoughtful design.

In this Issue, we also feature insightful conversations with visionary architects and designers who have made a lasting impact on India's hospitality sector. Through their innovative designs, creative problem-solving, and attention to detail, they have redefined the way we experience hospitality in India.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Happy Reading!

(Seema Sreedharan)
Editor

BUILDING FROM THE EARTH

In a bold break from Rajasthan's conventional luxury, Ahmedabad-based Scarlett Designs, helmed by architect Kush Shah, is revolutionising architectural norms—blending modern design with nature to deliver the refreshingly contemporary Ananta Spa & Resort, Ajabgarh

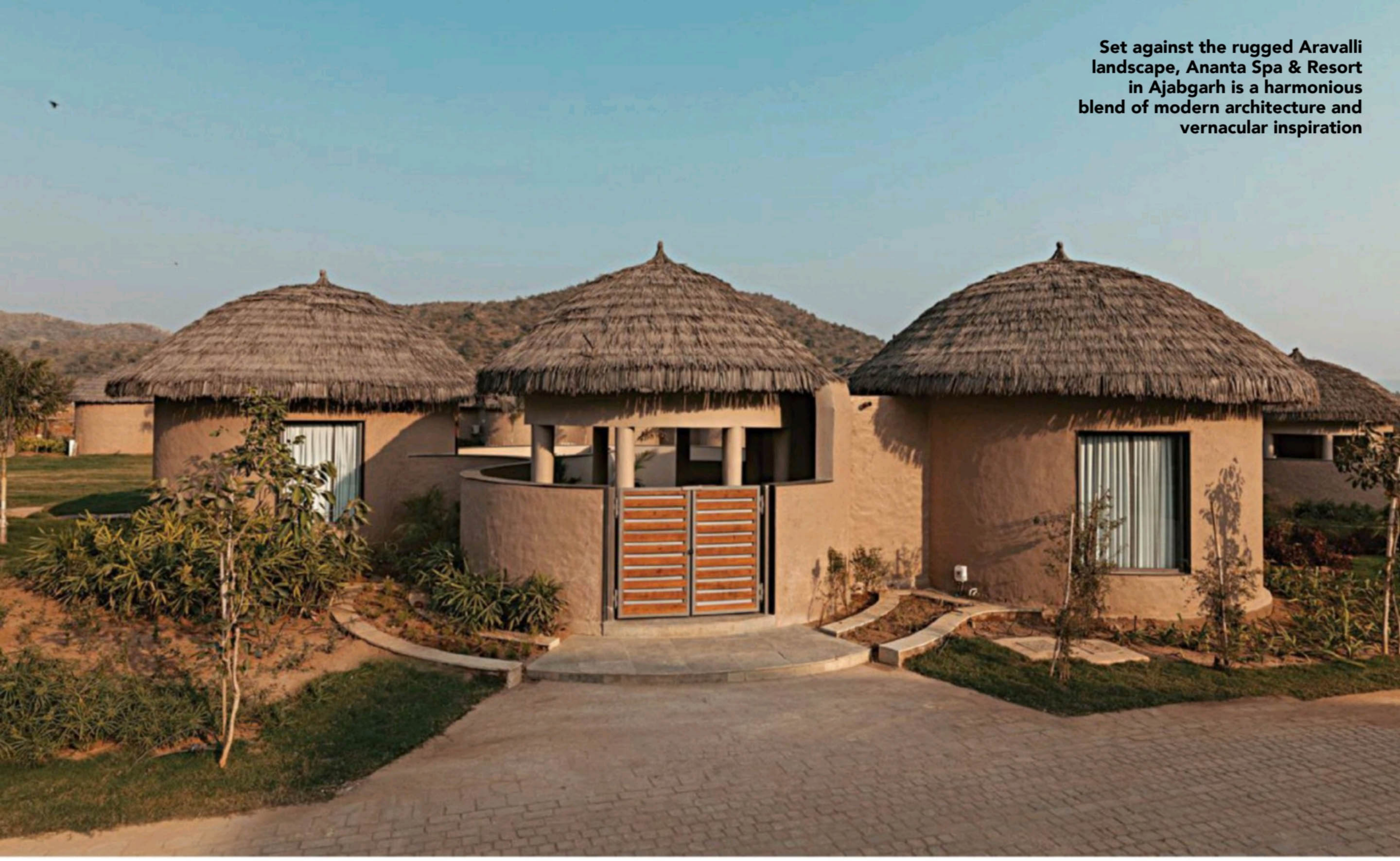
BY ANKITA RATHOD

Kush Shah, Founder & Principal Architect, Scarlett Designs (Ahmedabad)

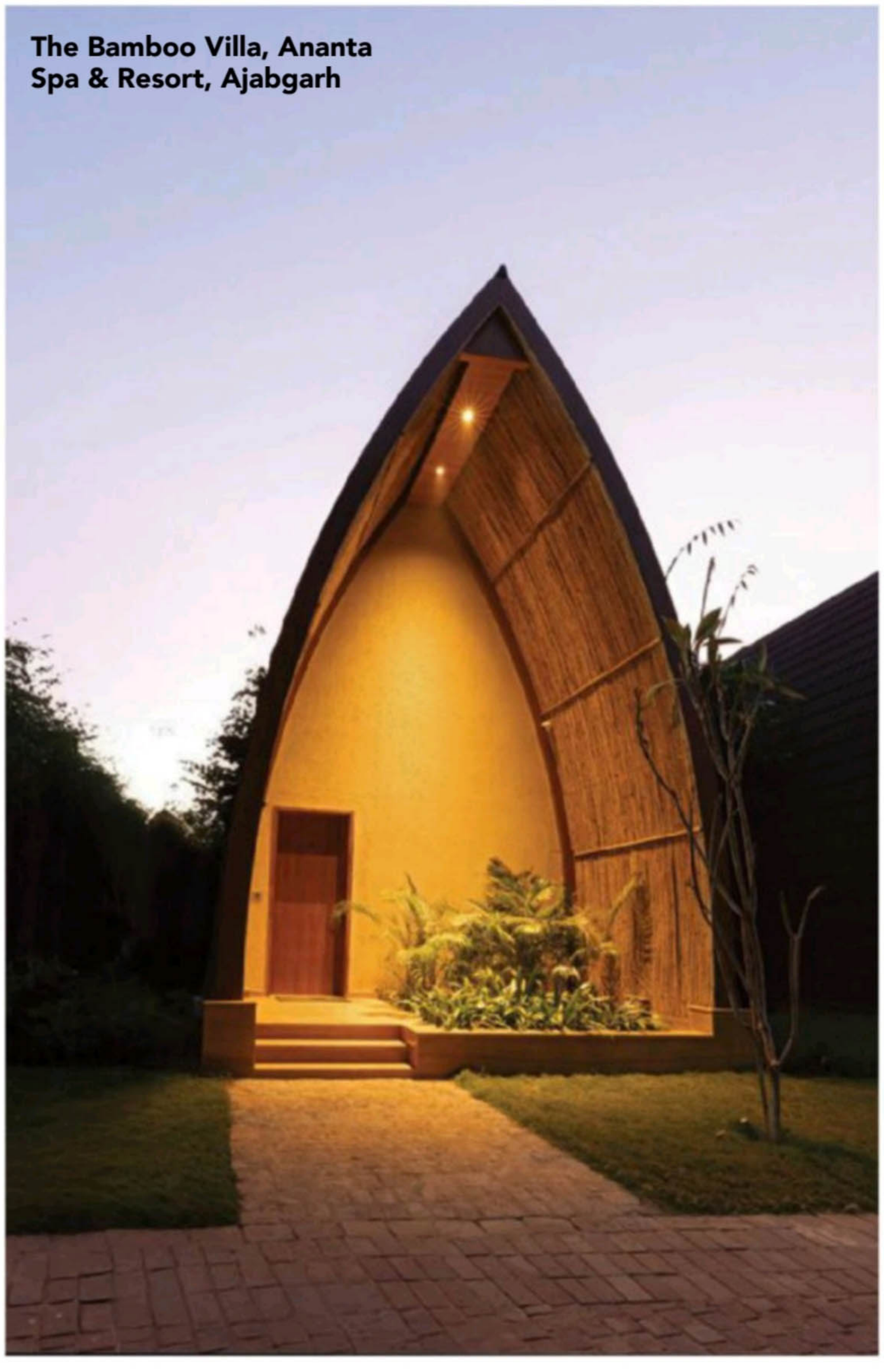
With more than three decades of experience, Kush Shah, founder of Scarlett Designs, has become a pioneering force in architecture. As our Teams call connects, I can't help but notice the backdrop of Kush's office—a raw, exposed brick wall that instantly evokes the timeless simplicity of Louis Kahn's work, one of Kush's greatest influences. It's a fitting scene, reflecting his design philosophy, where raw materials and authenticity reign supreme. A proud CEPT graduate, Kush's approach has been shaped by the legacies of Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier, merging tradition with modernity in a way few can replicate. His latest project, Ananta Resort in Ajabgarh, is a stunning example of nature-inspired luxury that breaks free from convention. As we dive into our conversation, Kush opens up about his design journey, the challenges faced in creating Ananta Spa & Resort in Ajabgarh, and how his deep connection to the land continues to shape his visionary approach to architecture.

Excerpts from the interview...

Ankita Rathod (AR): Kush, Ananta in Ajabgarh is a departure from typical Rajasthan luxury. What was the brief from the Ananta Group, and how did you execute it?
Kush Shah (KS): "Exactly! The brief was clear—Sanjay (Goyal), the client, didn't want us to replicate the typical palatial designs you often find in Rajasthan. You know, where they take a mountaintop and create a fort-like structure with Indo-Saracenic elements. We wanted something different—something that was deeply rooted in heritage but not confined by it. We drew from the broader Indian history, not just Rajasthan. You'll see courtyards, colonnades, and double-height spaces, but these elements have been reinterpreted to feel modern, while still staying true to the essence of Indian architecture."



Set against the rugged Aravalli landscape, Ananta Spa & Resort in Ajabgarh is a harmonious blend of modern architecture and vernacular inspiration



The Bamboo Villa, Ananta Spa & Resort, Ajabgarh

> **Each villa at Ananta has a unique connection to nature. For example, the Bamboo Villa. The bamboo grove near the villa inspired the design. When you look at the bamboo growing along the pathways, it's as if it's coming together in an alliance. That really dictated the form of the villa. It's inspired by the organic shapes of nature."**
>
> —KUSH SHAH, Scarlett Designs

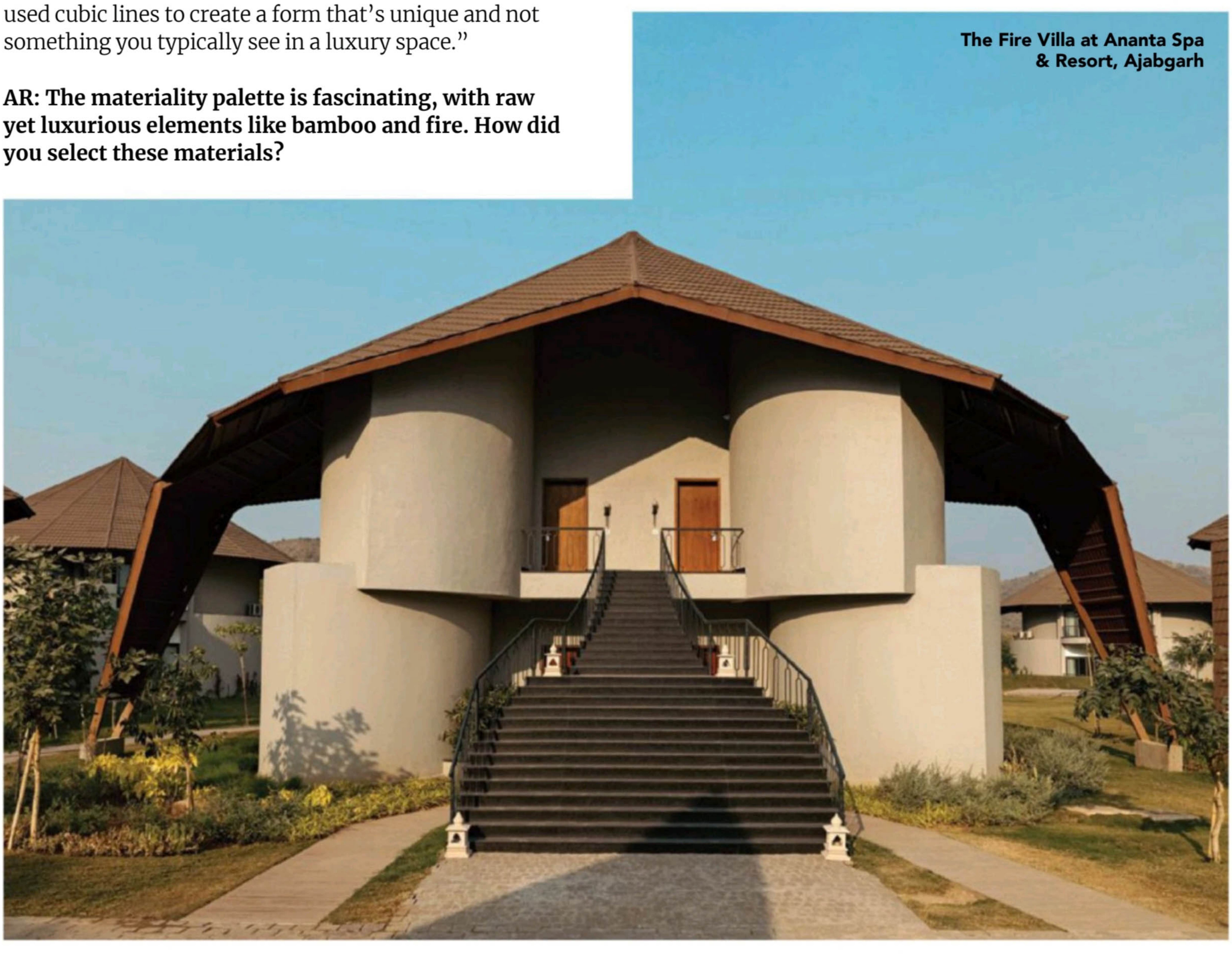
AR: The property feels in harmony with its surroundings. How did you use the landscape to shape the design?
KS: "The design isn't just for aesthetics; it's about working with the environment. Rajasthan's weather is intense—hot and dry for most of the year. So, we focused on creating spaces that breathe naturally. The courtyards, colonnades, and the layout itself all respond to the wind flow and create shaded areas that allow for natural ventilation. This is key to the comfort of the guests, while still staying true to the aesthetic and heritage of the region. The layout is completely organic, responding to the contours of the land. No two pathways are the same, and that's very deliberate. It's a break from the usual grid systems."

The idea was never to use opulent materials that distract from the natural beauty of the space. We wanted the materials to feel authentic, raw, and honest. So we used bamboo, stone, and wood in their natural state."

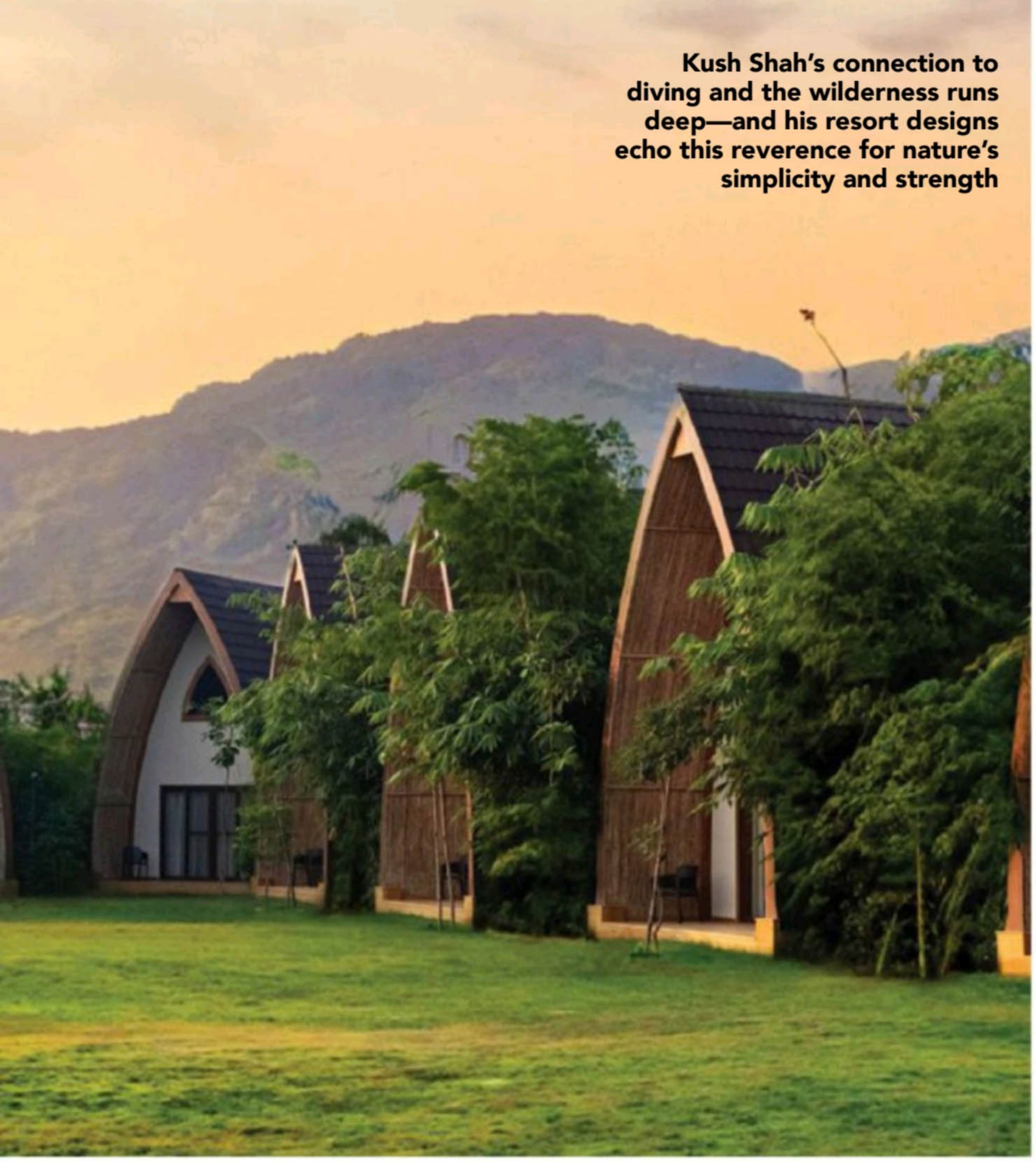
—KUSH SHAH, Scarlett Designs

AR: The Earth, Fire, Lagoon, and Bamboo Villas each have distinct identities. What inspired these designs?
KS: "Each villa at Ananta has a unique connection to nature. For example, the Bamboo Villa. The bamboo grove near the villa inspired the design. When you look at the bamboo growing along the pathways, it's as if it's coming together in an alliance. That really dictated the form of the villa. It's inspired by the organic shapes of nature. Similarly, the Earth Villa takes inspiration from traditional Rajasthani architecture, where we use materials like stone and wood that are deeply connected to the region's vernacular design. As for the Fire Villa, it's an abstract representation of fire, which is not literal. We sketched out the flames and used cubic lines to create a form that's unique and not something you typically see in a luxury space."

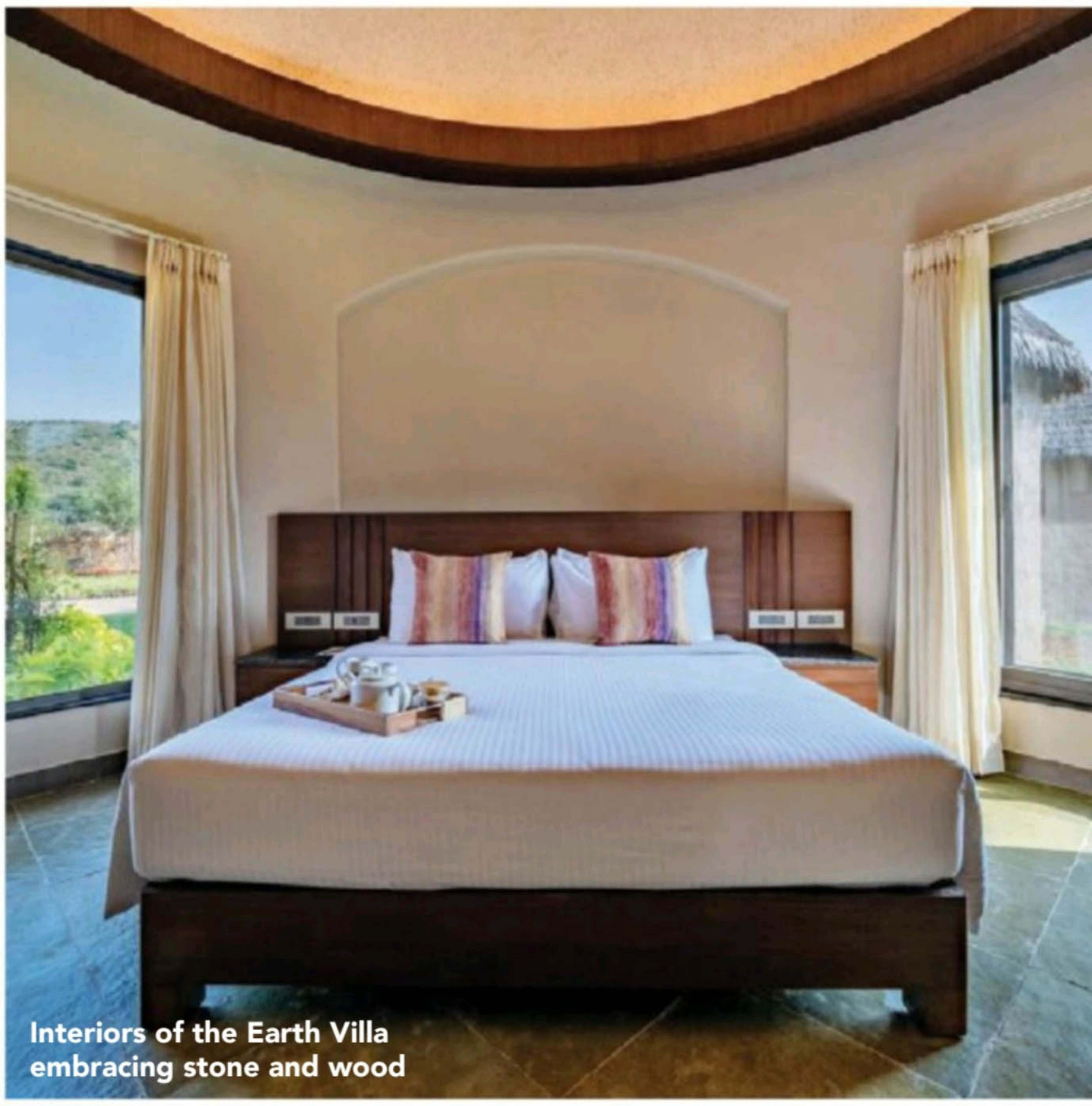
AR: The materiality palette is fascinating, with raw yet luxurious elements like bamboo and fire. How did you select these materials?



The Fire Villa at Ananta Spa & Resort, Ajabgarh



Kush Shah's connection to diving and the wilderness runs deep—and his resort designs echo this reverence for nature's simplicity and strength



Interiors of the Earth Villa embracing stone and wood

KS: "The idea was never to use opulent materials that distract from the natural beauty of the space. We wanted the materials to feel authentic, raw, and honest. So we used bamboo, stone, and wood in their natural state. There are no gilded mirrors, no massive chandeliers—nothing that takes away from the connection to the land. The design is about creating warmth and comfort through the landscape, the layouts, and the natural materials. It's all very simple but still luxurious because it feels real. The organic paths and random placement of the villas break away from the rigid geometry we typically see in architecture, and that's key to creating a space that feels grounded in nature."

AR: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced while designing and constructing the property?
KS: "This project definitely wasn't without its challenges! The land itself was difficult; the boundaries kept shifting, and that forced us to revise the layout multiple times. This wasn't a typical urban site, and approvals and clearances were often delayed. The construction process was challenging, too, since we were working in such a remote location. Even something as simple as getting paint or materials was a logistical challenge. We had to transport everything from Jaipur or Delhi, and it could take hours. But these challenges led to creative solutions, and we found ways to adapt the design to the land, which made it all the more rewarding."

AR: You've had such an impressive career in design. Tell us a little bit about your journey and early influences in design?
KS: "It's been an incredible journey, and over the years, my perspective has evolved—but I've always stayed connected to the basics—simplicity, authenticity, and a deep respect for nature. I've always admired architects like Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier and their ability to push boundaries. Frank Lloyd Wright revolutionised architecture with his open-plan concepts, which was unheard of at the time. Le Corbusier's brutalism, using exposed concrete, was also groundbreaking. He broke away from the polished, fine finishes that were common at the time and showed how raw materials could be used effectively. Louis Kahn, on the other hand, took inspiration from classical architecture and reinterpreted it in a modern context. Their work influenced me by showing that architecture isn't just about aesthetics—it's about understanding materials, breaking conventions, and creating spaces that resonate with their time. And it was amazing that most of these architects built in Ahmedabad—so it was inspiring to grow up surrounded by these iconic structures and learn from them firsthand."

AR: Before we wrap up, I know you're also passionate about diving and nature. How do these personal interests influence your design work?
KS: "Yes, I'm a certified open-water diver, and whenever I get the chance, I dive. There's something about being in the ocean, surrounded by marine life, that keeps me grounded. It's such a peaceful experience, and it reminds me of the raw beauty of nature. Similarly, I love going on safaris and exploring the jungle. These experiences help me stay connected to the natural world, which in turn informs my design work. Nature is the greatest teacher, and it constantly reminds me of how simple, yet powerful, things can be when they're rooted in the earth." ✚

CRAFTING JAIPUR'S NEW CULTURAL IDENTITY

The founder of IDEAS, a multidisciplinary architecture firm based in Jaipur, talks timeless design, civic consciousness, and how the city is evolving into a global thought capital. From Sawai Man Mahal and The Sawai Madhopur Lodge – A Taj Property to the Constitution Club of Rajasthan, his work bridges culture and contemporary living with quiet power

BY ANKITA RATHOD

Gyanendra Singh Shekhawat,
Principal Architect, IDEAS

In Jaipur, where centuries-old palaces and temples whisper tales of a regal past, architect Gyanendra Singh Shekhawat is crafting a future that honours every detail of that legacy—while speaking a thoroughly modern language. As the founder of IDEAS, a multidisciplinary architecture firm based in Jaipur, Shekhawat has become a key figure in the city's transformation—from a historic tourist destination into a forward-thinking cultural capital. His portfolio ranges from iconic high-rises and adaptive reuse projects to civic institutions that celebrate regional identity. In this exclusive conversation, Shekhawat opens up about place-making, storytelling, and the philosophies that guide his work.

What was the idea behind IDEAS, and how has it influenced how people engage with Jaipur?
"IDEAS was founded over two decades ago with a vision to transform Jaipur's skyline while staying true to its heritage. Our aim has always been to strike a balance—between technology and history, form and feeling. In a city where the past is ever-present, we're creating modern architecture that coexists respectfully. This approach helps people connect more deeply with both the city's origins and its evolving future."

> **Our philosophy is to retain the soul of heritage but express it through a modern lens. Sawai Man Mahal is a good example—an adaptive reuse project in the same premises as the Rambagh Palace. We preserved key architectural elements while integrating contemporary luxuries."**
>
> —GYANENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT
> Principal Architect, IDEAS

**The Sawai Man Mahal:
The Arrival Court**

The Guest Suite - The Sawai Madhopur Lodge

Hospitality in Jaipur isn't about opulence alone—it's about experience. Growing up here, I saw how the city radiates charm and warmth. Whether it's a palace hotel or a haveli homestay, there's an emotional resonance."

—GYANENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT
Principal Architect, IDEAS

The Jai Mahal Palace - The Guest Room

The Leela Palace - The Arrival Plaza

What does hospitality mean to you in a culturally rich city like Jaipur?

"Hospitality in Jaipur isn't about opulence alone—it's about experience. Growing up here, I saw how the city radiates charm and warmth. Whether it's a palace hotel or a haveli homestay, there's an emotional resonance. Guests are immersed in Rajasthani culture—through music, food, attire, and rituals. True hospitality is when heritage seamlessly meets the needs of the modern guest."

How do culture and civic consciousness shape your approach to place-making?

"To me, place-making is memory-making. And memories are rooted in cultural cues and civic responsibility. Culture gives a place depth; civic consciousness defines how people respect and engage with it. A project I'm proud of is the Constitution Club of Rajasthan. We designed it to reflect democratic values while using regional materials and symbolism. It's not just a building—it's a cultural institution that invites pride and participation."

You've spoken about Jaipur as a 'thought capital.' What does that mean in practice?

"Jaipur has always had a magnetic pull, but today it's also becoming a destination for ideas. The Jaipur

The Sawai Man Mahal

Literature Festival, Rajasthan Architecture Festival, Jaipur Design Week—all these events have brought diverse creative voices here. It is now a winter hub for residencies, conferences, and cultural exchange. With great infrastructure and a storied backdrop, it's poised to become a global stage for new perspectives."

How does heritage inform your hospitality design?
"Our philosophy is to retain the soul of heritage but express it through a modern lens. The Sawai Man Mahal is a good example—an adaptive reuse project in the same premises as the Rambagh Palace. We preserved key architectural elements while integrating contemporary luxuries. Every detail—from carved marble to textiles—tells a story. We want guests to feel like they're part of a living legacy."

What role does storytelling play in connecting guests to a space?
"Storytelling is central—it gives meaning to every material and decision. At the Sawai Madhopur Lodge, once a royal hunting retreat, we reflected the wilderness of Ranthambore in the interiors. Collaborating with local artisans, we studied the jungle's colours and forms to inform our design. Guests don't just see a hotel—they feel history and place."

How do you balance global design influences with local authenticity?
"Travel opens your eyes, but design must remain rooted. At Taj Palitana Palace, we deeply researched Jain traditions and collaborated with local craftspeople. 'Think local, act global' isn't just a phrase—it's a value. The result is design that's contextually rich yet globally relevant."

What would you like to inspire in the next generation of hoteliers and designers?
"I hope they chase timelessness. Design today often chases trends, but hospitality should endure. We're working on restorations like Rambagh Palace and Jai Mahal Palace—upgrading comfort while preserving heritage. Storytelling isn't a gimmick, it's a responsibility. When we honour narratives, we don't just build properties—we shape cultural continuity."

Any recent or upcoming collaborations you'reexcited about?
"At the Sawai Madhopur Lodge, we worked with Rasa on jungle-inspired textiles, and with Stone&Crafts on sculpted marble pieces like antelope-head fountains. At Taj Palitana Palace, we're collaborating with Sompura artisans using traditional reconstruction methods. We're also replanting endangered native tree species." ✠

A DESIGNER'S LEGACY: REDEFINING HOSPITALITY

Architect Khozema Chitalwala, a hospitality design stalwart, shares his expertise on creating unique and captivating experiences

BY SEEMA SREEDHARAN

Khozema Chitalwala, Principal Architect, Designers Group

Architect Khozema Chitalwala has established himself as a prominent figure in hospitality design, a niche segment that requires a unique blend of creativity, functionality, and attention to detail. With a keen understanding of what makes a space truly unforgettable, Khozema has honed his expertise in crafting bespoke experiences that cater to the diverse needs of travellers and locals alike. With over three decades of experience in crafting hospitality spaces, his designs continue to set benchmarks in the industry. In an interesting interaction with A+D, Khozema shares his insights on curating memorable spaces that cater to a diverse demographic. Here's an excerpt:

You've been in the industry for over three decades, how did you veer towards hospitality design? How did that become your niche?
Khozema Chitalwala (KC): To be honest, my journey into hospitality design began unexpectedly. After working on numerous retail projects, including 200+ stores for Titan, I shared my passion for hospitality with Mr Sampath Kumar, who was then associated with Taj. He became my mentor and offered me my first hospitality project opportunity with Taj. It was a dream come true! After completing two projects, I knew hospitality design was the right fit for our firm. I'm grateful to Sujata and my team for supporting me in pursuing this dream.

How do you believe hospitality design can enhance the guest experience? And what elements do you consider essential in creating memorable spaces?
KC: Hospitality design has undergone a significant transformation over the years, driven by drastic changes in lifestyles. Today, hospitality experiences are becoming increasingly tailored to specific segments, locations, and target audiences. With travel now an integral part of modern life, guests seek a "home away from home" experience, prioritising comfort, flexibility, and a sense of belonging. To achieve this, designers are incorporating elements that foster a homely feel, allowing guests to move freely and use spaces as they desire. This shift has led to

Devi Ratn, Jaipur

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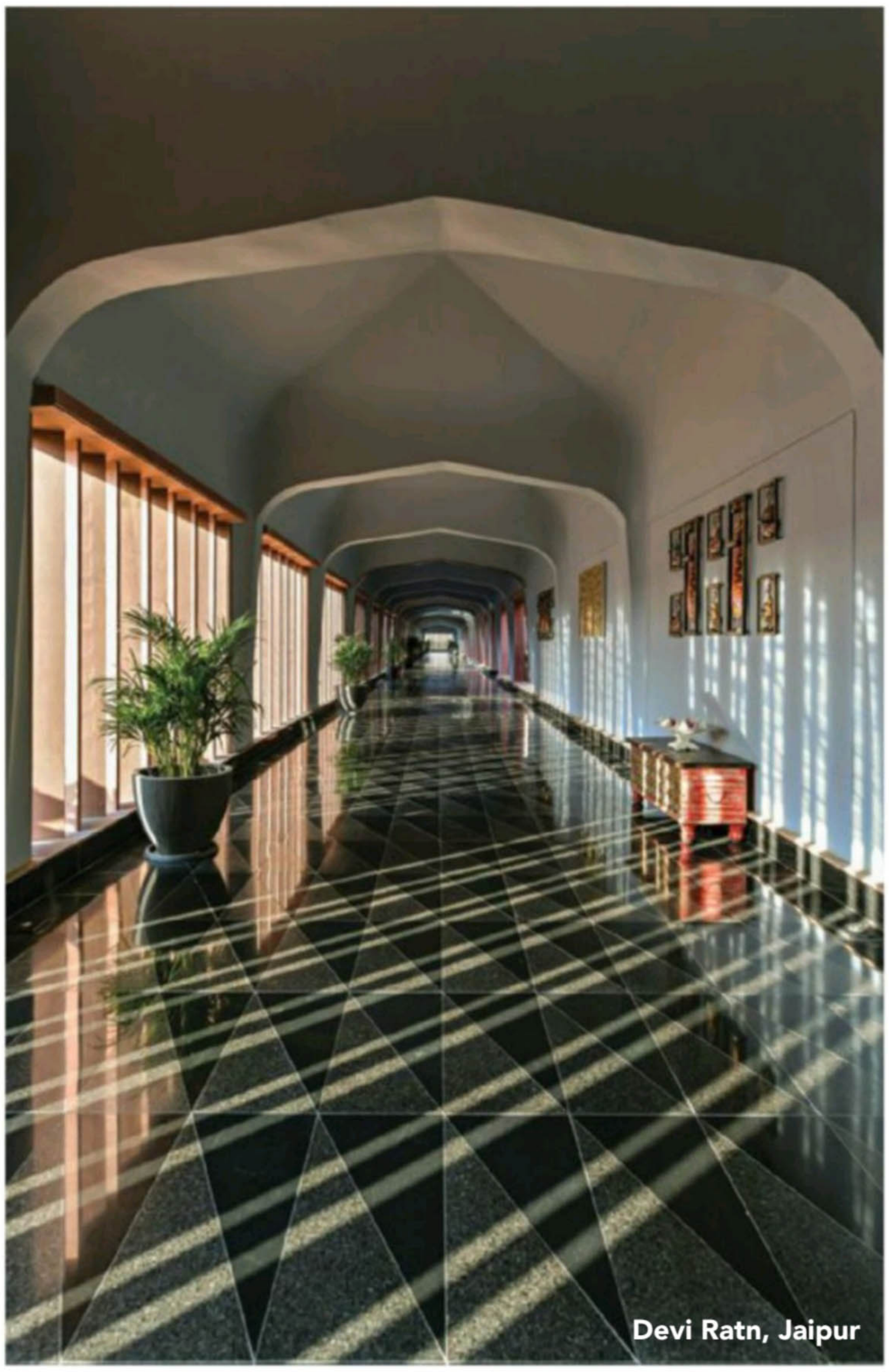
> Principal Architect, Designers Group

increased flexibility in design, with non-revenue generating areas being repurposed as revenue-generating spaces that encourage social interaction and community building. Compared to 20 years ago, hospitality design has evolved to prioritise experiential and personalized elements.

Looking ahead, what trends or innovations do you foresee shaping the future of hospitality design? How do you see your work evolving in response to these changes?
KC: The design language varies depending on location and audience. While contemporary and minimalist designs are popular, trends are changing rapidly due to shifting lifestyles. Technology integration is crucial, especially for younger generations. However, luxury hospitality still values human touch and intervention.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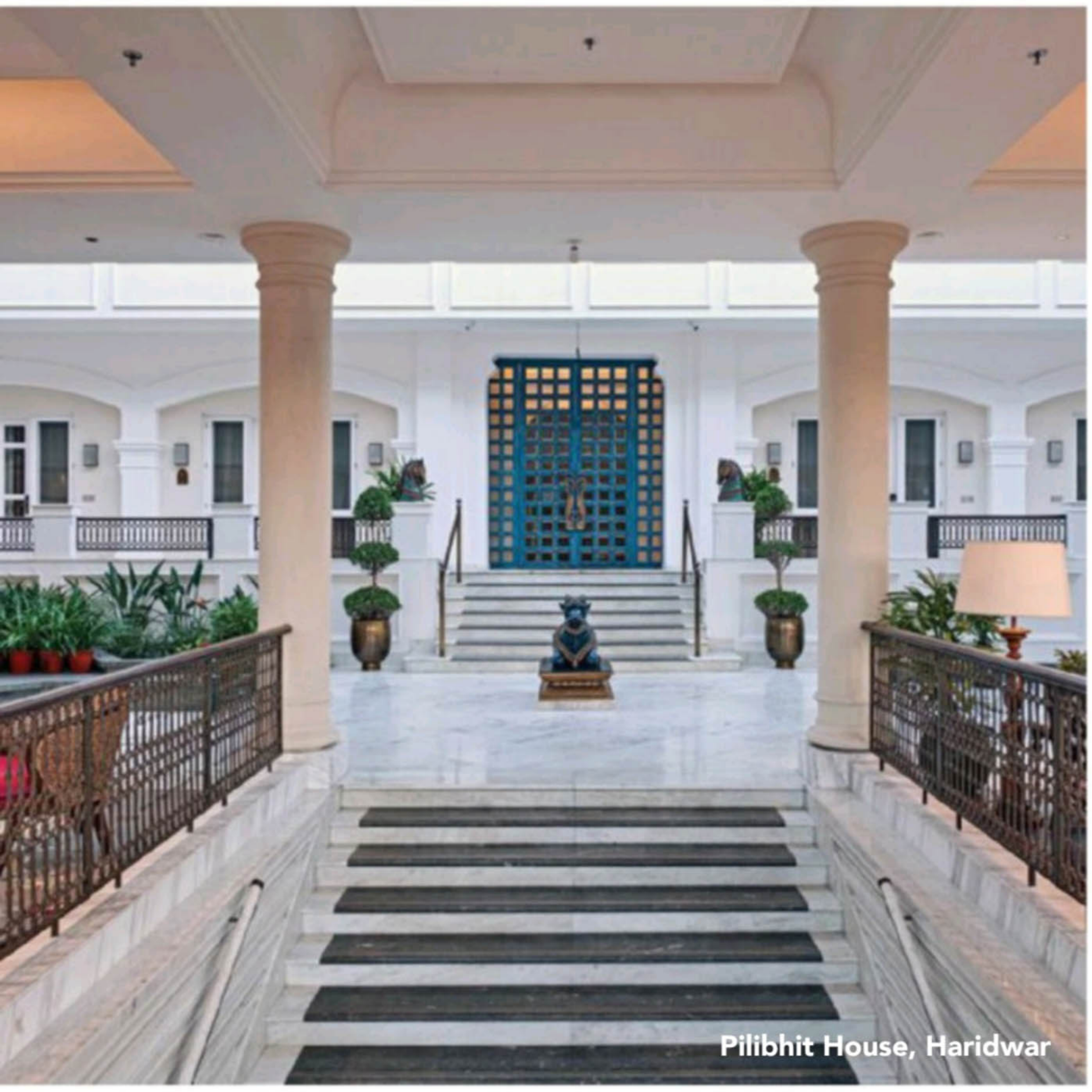
Pilibhit House, Haridwar

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> **Cultural sensitivity is crucial, especially in India where cultural nuances are deeply rooted. While international brands may struggle to understand local values, Indian brands tend to be more sensitive to these nuances."**
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Sustainability is also becoming increasingly important, but it's often used as a buzzword rather than a genuine design consideration. I believe it's essential to prioritise embodied carbon emission levels and educate clients on sustainable design practices. When designing projects, we strive to be as sustainable and green as possible. We aim to minimize our impact on the environment, using local materials and preserving natural surroundings. For example, in a recent resort project, we managed to save 25 acres of green cover by removing only six to seven trees. We're also working to educate clients on the importance of calculating and reducing embedded carbon footprint.

Design documentation is crucial for project delivery, allowing us to work efficiently from the office without constant site visits. At Designers Group, we've adopted a digital approach, minimising printouts and embracing sustainability. We use digital platforms for drawings, sketches, and collaboration, even for large 25-acre sites.

Can you share your thoughts on balancing cultural sensitivity with sustainability in hospitality design, considering the complexities of large-scale projects?

KC: Cultural sensitivity is crucial, especially in India where cultural nuances are deeply rooted. While international brands may struggle to understand local values, Indian brands tend to be more sensitive to these nuances. To create unique identities for properties, we incorporate local elements and narratives, even in cookie-cutter designs. This approach allows us to craft distinct stories for each property, making them memorable for guests.

In hospitality design, contextual relevance is about embracing the local culture, history, and surroundings. By incorporating design elements that reflect the location's heritage and adapting them to modern needs, we create a sense of belonging for guests. This can be achieved through strategic use of natural views, local art, and thoughtful design that blends seamlessly with the environment. The result is a harmonious and immersive experience that goes beyond aesthetics, connecting guests with the local context.

One project that stands out to me is Pilibhit House, which we completed during the lockdown. It was a challenging project that showcased the importance of design documentation. Despite the obstacles, we're proud of what we achieved, and it's a project that's close to my heart.

What is the most challenging aspect of designing hospitality spaces and how do you overcome these challenges?

KC: We're currently working on some exciting and challenging projects involving heavily contoured sites, which is a new area of focus for us in resort design. With the rise of domestic travel, resorts in exotic locations with complex terrain are becoming increasingly popular. One such project features a 10-acre site with a 100-meter slope, requiring careful design to preserve the natural environment without disturbing existing trees. It's a challenging project, but that's what drives us.

Just a little curious here. How many hospitality projects have you done so far?

KC: Honestly, I've stopped counting. It must definitely be more than 300 projects so far... Our portfolio includes a diverse range of hotel projects, from full-scale developments to renovations and brownfield/greenfield initiatives. Currently, we have around 50-60 ongoing hotel projects at various stages of completion.

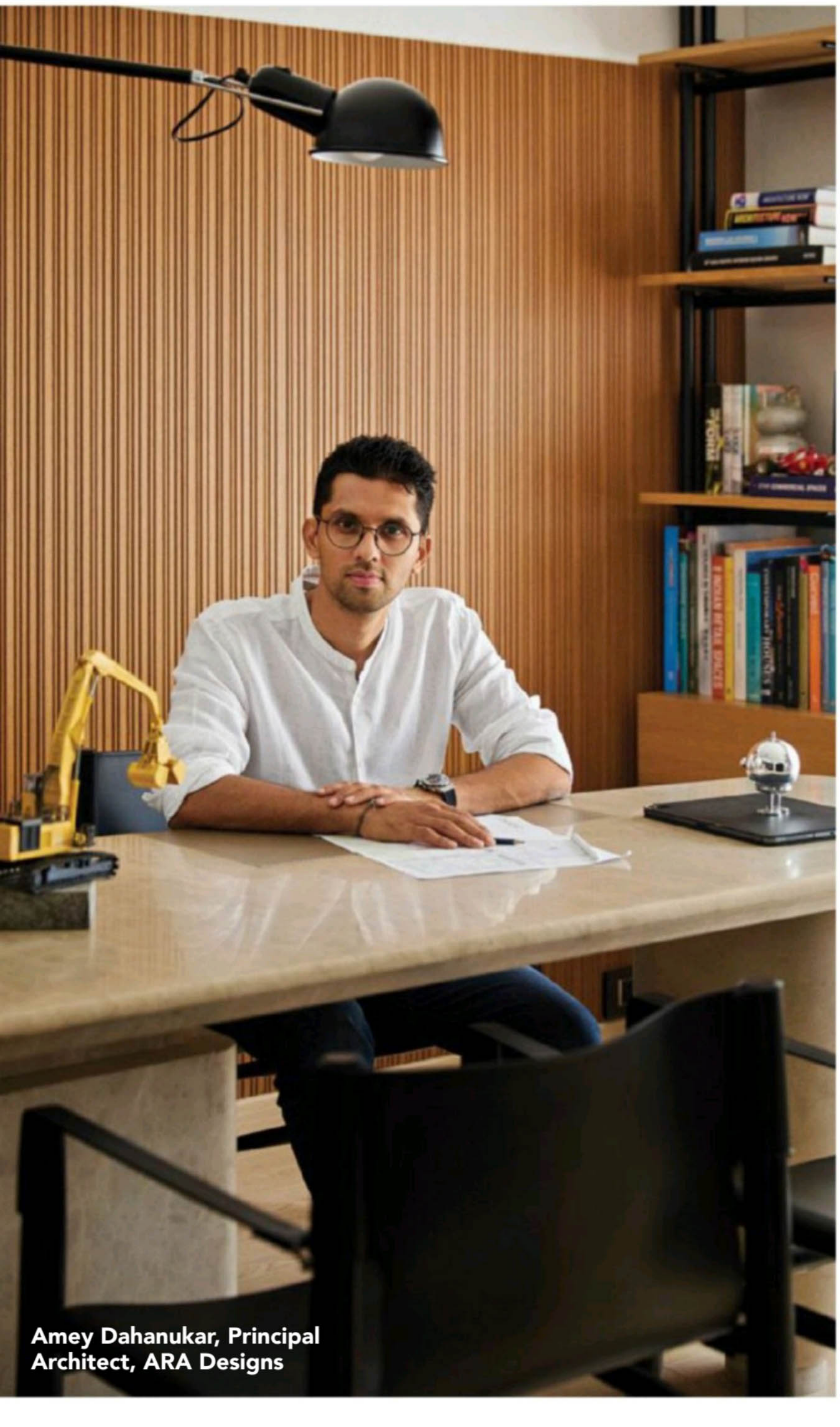
Coming to my last question, what guidance would you offer to emerging designers looking to specifically break into the hospitality design segment?

KC: It took me 26 years to achieve this level of expertise. I believe perseverance and hard work are key. Young designers should focus on learning, taking on projects, and gaining experience, even in supporting roles. By mastering the fundamentals and delivering quality work, they'll attract more projects and build their reputation. With India's growing demand for design talent, there's a need for skilled designers who can handle the increasing workload.

PERFECTING THE LANGUAGE OF SPACES

Architect Amey Dahanukar, Principal Architect, ARA Designs shares his perspective on the nuances of designing hospitality projects

BY SEEMA SREEDHARAN



Amey Dahanukar, Principal Architect, ARA Designs

Architect Amey Dahanukar brings a wealth of expertise to the realm of hospitality design. With a keen eye for detail and a deep understanding of what makes a space truly memorable, Amey shares his perspective on the nuances of designing hospitality projects that leave a lasting impression on guests. From concept to completion, Amey's approach blends creativity, functionality, and a passion for delivering exceptional experiences. In this insightful conversation, Amey delves into the intricacies of hospitality design, offering valuable insights for architects, designers, and anyone passionate about creating spaces that tell a story.

How do you believe hospitality design can enhance the guest experience, and what elements do you consider essential in creating memorable spaces?
Amey Dahanukar (AD): There's a certain sense of imagination embedded in every place. Sometimes it's in the food, other times in the space itself. Striking the

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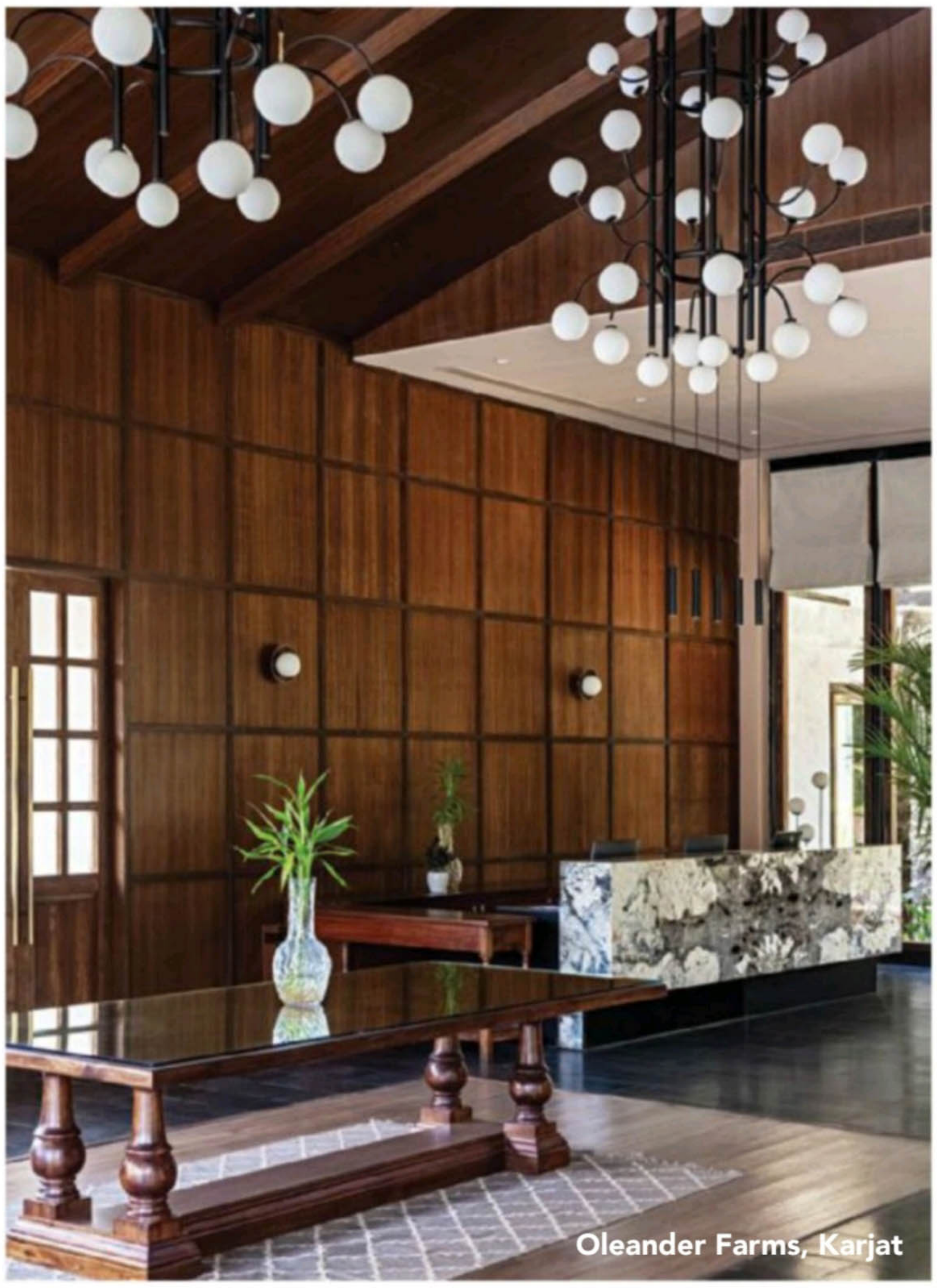
> —AMEY DAHANUKAR
> Principal Architect, ARA Designs

Oleander Farms, Karjat



Oleander Farms, Karjat

right balance between the two is essential — because what you take away is not just a meal, but an entire experience. Today, restaurants are more than places to eat. They've become expressions of lifestyle, shaping how we feel and even how we transition in and out of a space. That's why harmony between the cuisine and the environment is so important. Take, for example, Dinings in London — one of the most remarkable Japanese restaurants I've ever been to. Tucked away like a small home, it has just about six tables. The focus is entirely on the food, with minimal distractions. If you're looking for anything beyond the culinary experience, it's not the place. But if you want to truly savour exquisite Japanese cuisine, it's unforgettable.

On the other hand, there's Sushi Samba — a vibrant blend of Peruvian and Japanese influences. It's not just about the food; it's the full experience — the music, the design, the energy. It's the kind of place you go with a certain group of people, seeking a shared moment. Each location leaves behind a distinct impression. It shapes your mindset, tells you something about yourself, and ultimately helps you decide whether you'll return or not.

Cultural Sensitivity in Design: As a designer working on projects that often blend traditional and modern elements, how do you approach cultural sensitivity in your designs? Can you share an example from your experience?

AD: We've been fortunate to work on projects that not only excite us creatively but also allow for deeper cultural expression. Many of our clients have specifically emphasised the importance of incorporating cultural awareness into the entire design process, which has been incredibly rewarding. It pushes us to stay grounded in the place we're designing for — connecting with the space, its surroundings, culture, the people who live there, local materials, and the art that thrives in that region. All of these elements come together in our design approach to create an experience that lingers — something that sparks thought even as you're enjoying a meal. It's about leaving a lasting impression. One such project is Bombay Brasserie in Colaba, Mumbai, which has received a lot of appreciation for its design language. Drawing from the city's cultural fabric, we took inspiration from the dabbawalas — an iconic part of Mumbai's identity. We incorporated actual dabbas into the wall design, each marked with the symbolic coding system used by dabbawalas to deliver food across the city. It not only tells a story but brings a layer of authenticity to the space. We also featured wooden dolls, which carry cultural significance across India — from north to south. You'll often find them sold outside temples, symbolising a shared thread in our diverse traditions. In some parts of the country, kite flying holds a special place, and we've reflected that too. One entire wall is adorned with these wooden dolls, creating a sense of nostalgic familiarity and regional connection. Another great example is our work with Nando's. South African art is deeply embedded in the brand's identity, and even though their outlets are in India, we make it a point to retain that cultural essence. We integrate traditional South African elements into the design while aligning with their global brand strategy — creating a cohesive, culturally resonant experience.

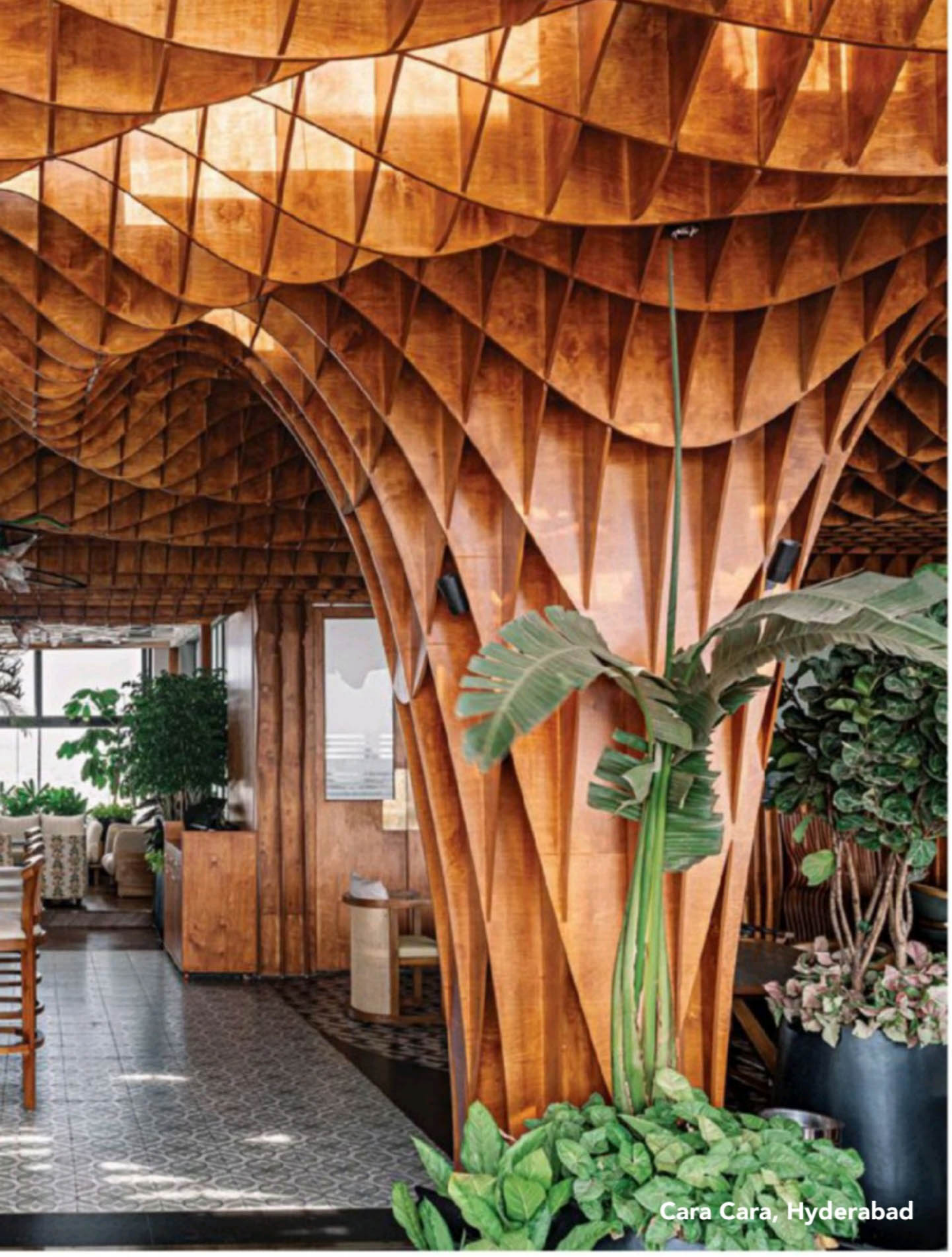
Cara Cara, Hyderabad

How do you incorporate sustainable design principles into your hospitality projects? What strategies or materials do you find most effective in reducing environmental impact?

AD: We make an effort to use local crafts people and materials that are readily available. We try to minimise our carbon impact, and the products we utilise have a low carbon footprint. We don't utilise a lot of PU or plastic products. All these efforts aid in maintaining equilibrium with the environment.

Looking ahead, what trends or innovations do you foresee shaping the future of hospitality design? How do you see your work evolving in response to these changes?

AD: The world of hospitality offers an incredible playground for creativity — where you can experiment with a wide range of concepts, materials, and ideas. That said, we've never been ones to follow trends. Instead,



Cara Cara, Hyderabad

> **One thing I truly believe is that there's no such thing as a "small" project in hospitality. Whether it's a 100-square-foot kiosk or a sprawling 10,000-square-foot restaurant, both have the potential to deliver meaningful, memorable experiences."**
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we've always chosen to explore. Our focus is on crafting something that feels genuinely authentic — to the brand, to the space, and to the story we're trying to tell. As design continues to evolve, digital art and technology are becoming increasingly integral to the way we shape experiences. We're using these tools more and more to create spaces that aren't just visually engaging but also interactive and immersive. That, in many ways, feels like the right direction. Moving forward, spaces won't just be about tables, chairs, food, and plates — they'll be about connection. About removing the feeling of isolated or static zones and replacing them with environments that speak to each other, and to the people within them.

Which of your hospitality projects are you most proud of, and what made them stand out to you? Are there any common themes or elements that run through these projects?

AD: To be honest, we take pride in every single project we undertake. Each one holds its own story and significance. That said, some spaces naturally stand out for the unique challenges or opportunities they presented. Take Cara Cara in Hyderabad, for instance — an experimental rooftop restaurant where we created a parametric birch canopy. It provides not only shade but also a beautiful interplay of sunlight and shadows, evoking the feeling of being inside a shell, even though you're out in the open. It's immersive and sculptural — an experience in itself. Then there's Oleander Farm Salt, a large-scale hotel project that's especially close to our hearts. Our involvement was so hands-on that we witnessed every single brick and stone being placed. That kind of intimacy with the process builds a deep connection to the space. We also have projects like Copper Chimney and Bombay Brasserie, which we built entirely from the ground up. These have a sentimental value that comes from shaping every detail from scratch — both creatively and emotionally. I could never single out one project as our favorite. They've all been meaningful in their own way. What excites us most is the variety — we've had the chance to explore different typologies and approaches across each space. They all feel true to the location, cuisine, and character. No two look or feel the same, and that's exactly how we believe it should be.

What do you find most challenging about designing hospitality spaces, and how do you overcome these challenges?

AD: I don't think there are challenges with hospitality, and after working in this sector for so long, I believe we have a solid understanding of operations. However, there is always a conflict between design and operations because we design the space and then leave it to the people who will be managing it on a daily basis. They don't really care about the design, therefore they bring their whole way of thinking and their ideas. That's all there is to it. But I think we've been able to find a good balance with time and with all the number of projects we've been able to do. So every mistake was a learning and we have put them together in a rule book which just makes sure not to do this again.

What guidance would you offer to emerging designers looking to break into the hospitality design field? Are there any key takeaways or insights you've gained throughout your career that you'd like to share?

AD: One thing I truly believe is that there's no such thing as a "small" project in hospitality. Whether it's a 100-square-foot kiosk or a sprawling 10,000-square-foot restaurant, both have the potential to deliver meaningful, memorable experiences. ✚

HOMESTAYS WITH HEART

Long before "slow travel" became a buzzword, before private villas replaced hotel suites, and well before authenticity became a luxury tagline—Tejas Parulekar was quietly building SaffronStays, a platform rooted in turning meaningful homes into unforgettable stays

BY ANKITA RATHOD

Tejas Parulekar, Founder, SaffronStays

A Chartered Accountant by training, Tejas left behind corporate banking stints at Ernst & Young, ICICI, and HSBC, only to answer a calling rooted in something far less transactional: the idea of home as experience. Alongside her husband and co-founder Devendra Parulekar, she launched SaffronStays—a hospitality collective that turned carefully chosen homes into soulful, design-aware destinations. Today, it's a network of over 250 homes across India, and each one doesn't just welcome you in—it stays with you. We sat down with Tejas to talk about what makes a house "stay-worthy," how design meets memory, and why the most powerful kind of hospitality often comes wrapped in small, soulful gestures.

What did luxury look like when you started—and what does it look like now?

"When we began, luxury was defined by extravagance—grand properties, uniform service, and excessive amenities. Today, it's a quieter, more meaningful concept. True luxury lies in authenticity, privacy, and emotional connection. It's the luxury of time—to slow down, to immerse, to feel. At SaffronStays, we've reimagined this through curated homestays that offer soulful experiences,

A stay-worthy home must stir something within you. Beyond architectural beauty or modern amenities, it must have soul. We seek homes that tell a story, that hold a sense of place—be it a colonial bungalow steeped in history or a serene cliffside cottage."

—TEJAS PARULEKAR, Founder, SaffronStays

SaffronStays AwwsanjA – Titaly in Murbad

personal touches, and the feeling of being cared for—without ever compromising on comfort."

What makes a home "stay-worthy" in your view?
"A stay-worthy home must stir something within you. Beyond architectural beauty or modern amenities, it must have soul. We seek homes that tell a story, that hold a sense of place—be it a colonial bungalow steeped in history or a serene cliffside cottage. The true test? Whether it evokes warmth, invites connection, and feels like it was waiting just for you."

How do you curate properties without losing their unique character?
"Curation at SaffronStays is intuitive and respectful. We retain the essence of each home and its hosts while layering in comfort, consistency, and thoughtful service. The goal is to enhance, not homogenise. Our homes don't feel like hotels; they feel lived-in, loved, and cared for—with standards that ensure every guest experience is seamless yet soulful."

How does India's idea of 'home' differ from the West—and how does that translate into your hospitality philosophy?
"In India, a home is not just four walls—it's a sanctuary of rituals, stories, and familial warmth. It's layered with memories and inherited wisdom. At SaffronStays, we translate this into a deeply immersive experience: private villas with modern comforts, home-cooked regional cuisine, cozy nooks filled with books, heritage courtyards, and personal hospitality. Its luxury wrapped in warmth—where privacy meets personality, and elegance meets emotion."

SaffronStays AwwsanjA
– Titaly in Murbad

SaffronStays AwwsanjA
– Titaly in Murbad

How do you approach legacy homes? Is there a tension between preservation and intervention?

"Preservation is a responsibility we hold dear. Our interventions are minimal and always in service of the structure's soul. For example, at our Goan heritage home, SaffronStays Nossa Bela Casa, we retained the original balcao, Mangalore tiles, and Portuguese windows, while sensitively introducing modern bathrooms, ambient lighting, and comfortable bedding. It's a conversation between past and present—where one complements, not competes with, the other."

In a world of ultra-luxury resorts, what's the power of small?

"In a world obsessed with scale, small offers soul. The intimacy of homestays allows for personalisation, heartfelt conversations, and one-of-a-kind memories. Think breakfast tailored to your taste, a handwritten welcome note, or a host sharing the history of a 150-year-old family home. Luxury today is about being seen, known, and remembered—and that's the magic small formats naturally allow."

What does sustainable, low-impact, high-value hospitality look like to you?

"It means creating meaningful experiences without compromising the environment, culture, or community. We focus on adaptive reuse of homes, support hyperlocal

SaffronStays Nossa Bela Casa, Cuelim, Goa

SaffronStays Fairytale, Tirthan Valley

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sourcing, and consciously avoid overdevelopment. But sustainability also means emotional longevity—experiences that leave guests enriched—and economic viability, where local caretakers, artisans, and hosts benefit. It's about value with values."

How involved are homeowners in shaping the guest experience?

"Our homeowners are the heart of the SaffronStays story. They're the storytellers, the historians, and often, the chefs. We empower them to share their legacy—through cuisine, architecture, and conversation. This co-creation ensures that no two stays are alike, and every experience is deeply rooted in authenticity."

How do you maintain consistency in emotional hospitality across such a wide geographic spread?

"We've developed a robust framework that blends empathy with training. Our caretakers are chosen for their warmth, then trained in both technical service and emotional intelligence. From remembering a guest's tea preference to anticipating their needs before they ask—emotional hospitality can't be taught in scripts, but it can be nurtured through care, consistency, and culture."

Tell us about a SaffronStays home that surprised you or pushed your understanding of what a homestay can be.

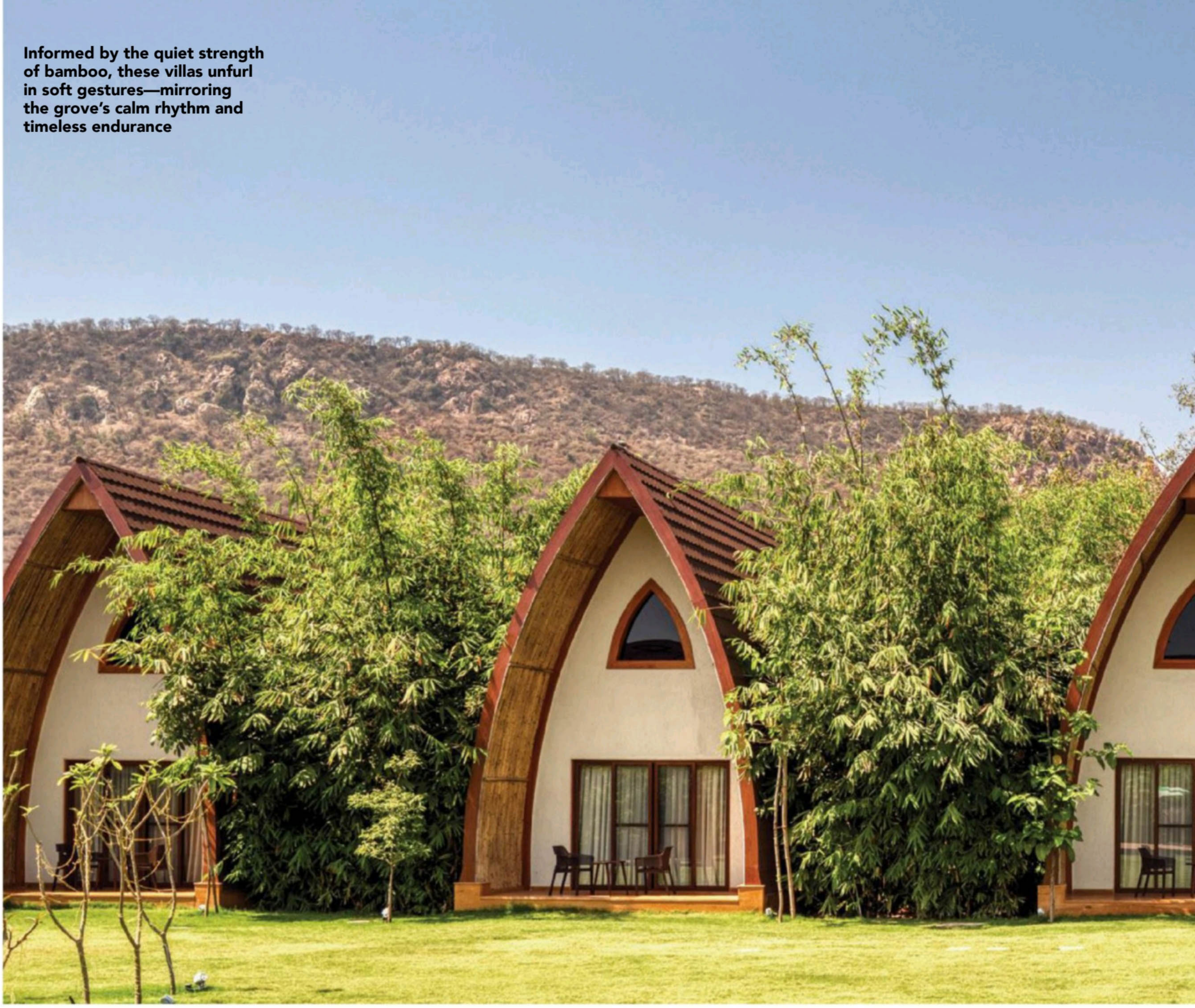
"*SaffronStays AwwsanjA – Titaly in Murbad* completely transformed my perception. It's India's first earth-sheltered hobbit home—burrowed into the Sahyadris, with 360° views of Machindragad and Gorakhgad. It's a stunning blend of sustainability, creativity, and quiet luxury. There's no marble, no chandeliers—just earth, air, and pure imagination. It reminded me that today's true luxury isn't about excess. It's about originality, privacy, and emotional richness."

BARE & BEAUTIFUL

In Ajabgarh's rugged Aravalli terrain, Ananta Spa & Resort—developed by the Jaipur-based Goyal family—takes a deliberate departure from traditional Rajasthani palace-style hospitality. With elemental architecture and site-sensitive planning, the resort prioritises restraint, privacy, and a deep connection to the land

TEXT BY ANKITA RATHOD ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY PULKIT SEHGAL

Nestled within 30 acres of the untamed Aravalli landscape, Ananta Spa & Resort in Ajabgarh redefines luxury with its elemental architecture and meditative stillness



Informed by the quiet strength of bamboo, these villas unfurl in soft gestures—mirroring the grove's calm rhythm and timeless endurance

It's six in the evening, and we're on our way back after a two-day whirlwind schedule to shoot the brand-new Ananta Spa & Resort in Ajabgarh. The photographer—who had been up since 7 a.m. capturing the stunning shots you'll see in this feature—is now fast asleep beside me as we race toward Jaipur airport, hoping to make the last flight out. It's only now, as the sun dips behind the Aravallis and the countryside blurs past the window, that it fully sinks in.

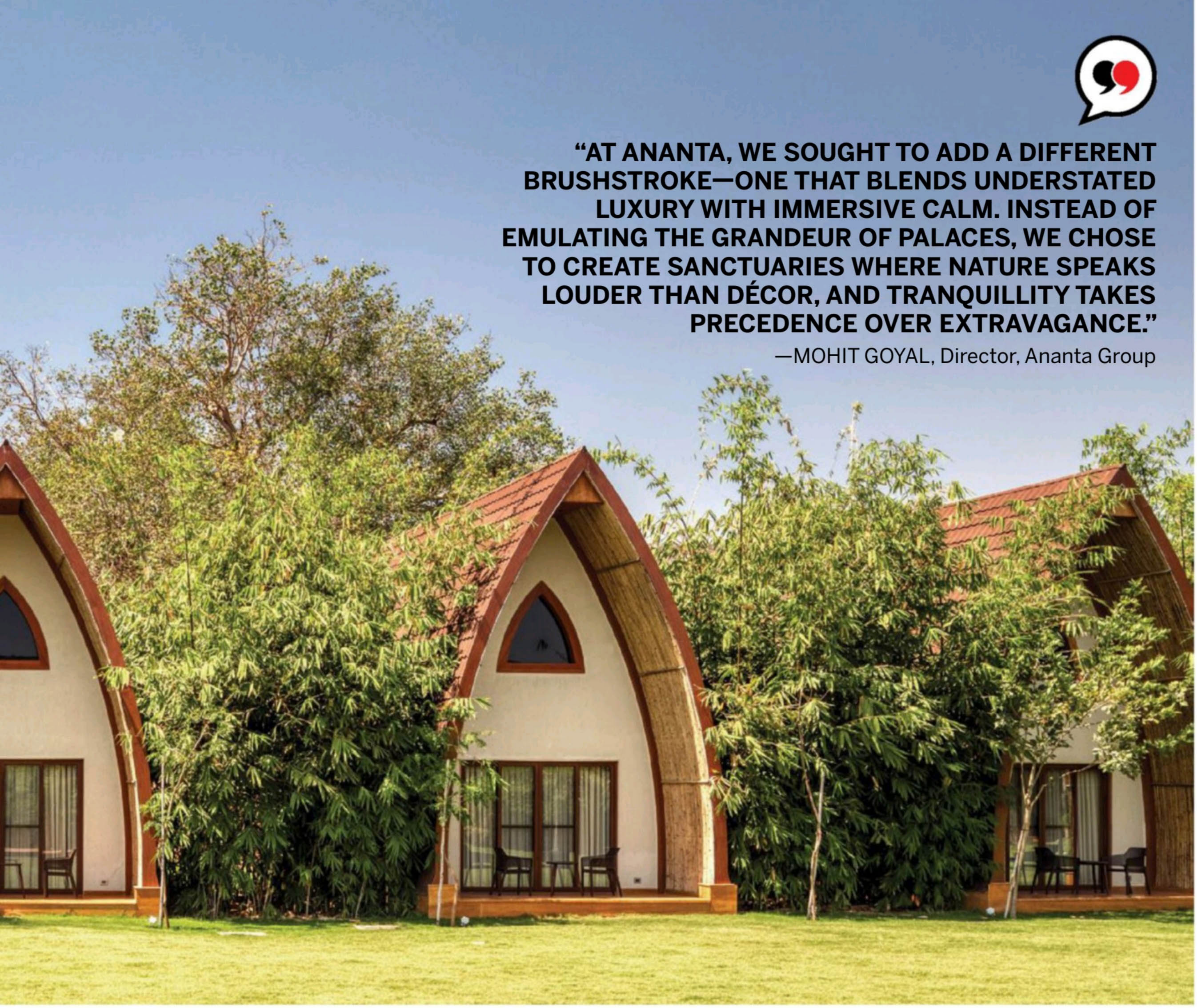
There were no glass chandeliers. No palatial domes. No gilded mirrors or marble inlays. No towering archways meant to recreate a romanticised past. Instead, what I found was something far more disarming: stone warmed by the sun, courtyards where light pooled like water, and villas that echoed not royalty, but earth—humble, grounded, and deeply comforting.

It was clear that this wasn't just a design decision—it was a philosophy in practice.

As Mohit Goyal, the design-forward director at Ananta Hotels & Resorts, explains, "Rajasthan, with its deep cultural roots and royal heritage, is already a canvas of opulence. At Ananta, we sought to add a different brushstroke—one that blends understated luxury with immersive calm. Instead of emulating the grandeur of palaces, we chose to create sanctuaries where nature speaks louder than décor, and tranquillity takes precedence over extravagance."

The result is a hospitality experience that doesn't demand attention—it earns presence. It felt as though the idea of hospitality had been turned inward. This wasn't a place to be dazzled by. It was a place to remember what stillness tastes like, to rediscover the joy of waking up to the crisp air, feeling the cool terracotta floors beneath your feet, and stepping into the world through courtyards designed to embrace the landscape.

Having visited many resorts that borrow too heavily—from Mughal fantasy and colonial nostalgia to the cookie-cutter designs of global catalogues—it's clear that Ananta at Ajabgarh is different. It doesn't play dress-up in the language of lost kingdoms, nor does it sell nostalgia or theatrical heritage. Instead, it steps around these traps,



"AT ANANTA, WE SOUGHT TO ADD A DIFFERENT BRUSHSTROKE—ONE THAT BLENDS UNDERSTATED LUXURY WITH IMMERSIVE CALM. INSTEAD OF EMULATING THE GRANDEUR OF PALACES, WE CHOSE TO CREATE SANCTUARIES WHERE NATURE SPEAKS LOUDER THAN DÉCOR, AND TRANQUILLITY TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER EXTRAVAGANCE."

—MOHIT GOYAL, Director, Ananta Group

creating something far more thoughtful, elemental, and rooted. For the first time in a while, I felt that the land led, and the architecture followed.

ROOTED IN REVERENCE

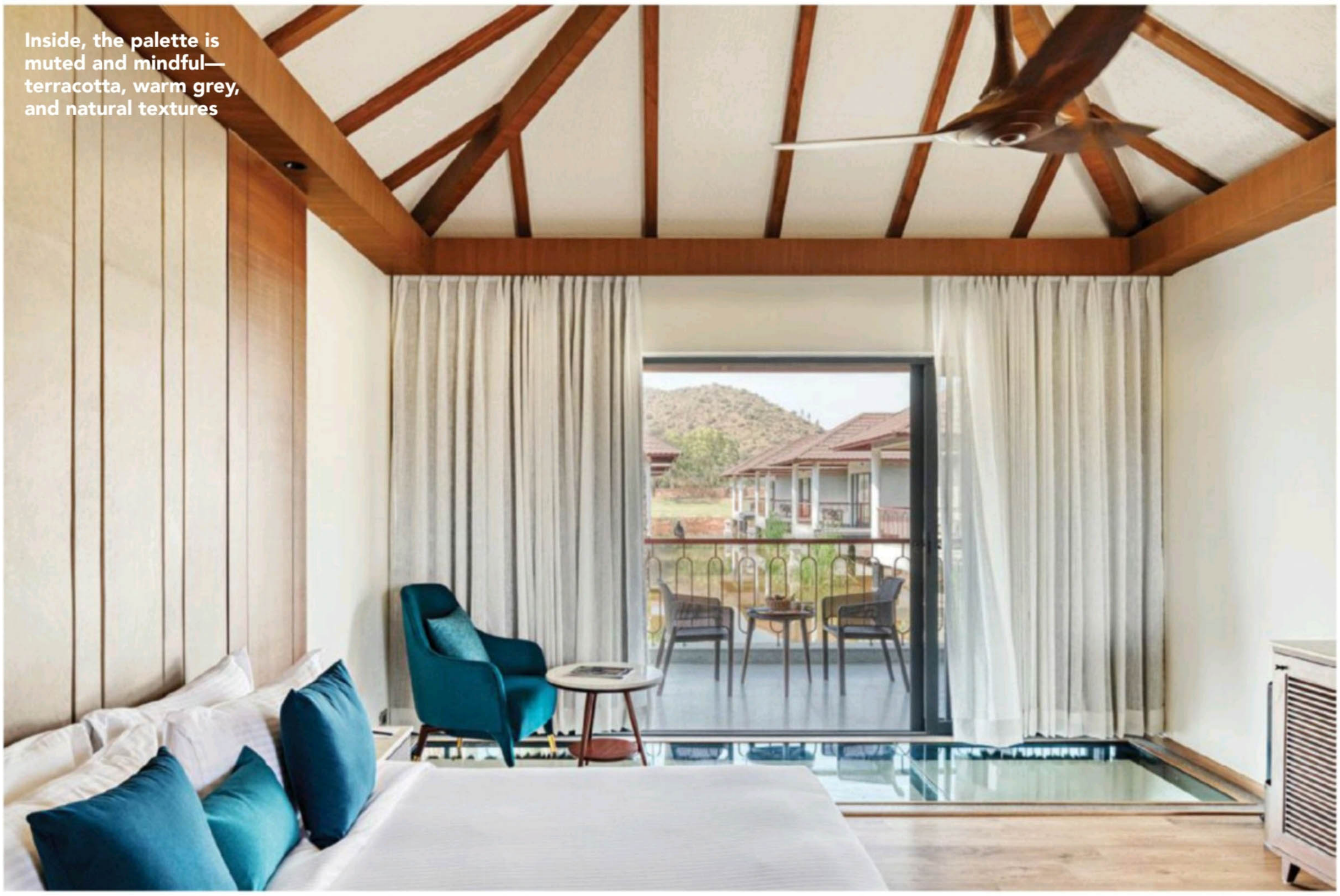
Rewind 48 hours: We rolled into the village of Ajabgarh, a picturesque 100 kilometres from Jaipur, where Ananta Spa & Resort has taken shape—not with the usual grand gestures, but as a quiet ode to understated elegance. Spanning 30 acres of untouched Aravalli terrain, this resort is a departure from your typical Rajasthani luxury retreat. It's not about showing off; it's about showing up. The land speaks, and Ananta simply listens. It doesn't try to recreate the past—it gently whispers the stories of it, reframed for a new era.

At the heart of Ananta Spa & Resort, Ajabgarh, lies a quiet but formidable generational legacy. The Goyals, a Jaipur-based family with deep roots in Rajasthan, have built a hospitality brand that is less about empire and more about essence. What began with Mukund Goyal—the philosophical patriarch and founding spirit—has now been carried forward by his son Sanjay Goyal and grandsons Mohit and Ashutosh Goyal. Across three generations, the family has remained steadfast in one belief: that true luxury lies not in spectacle, but in stillness. Ajabgarh is their most eloquent expression of that philosophy yet.

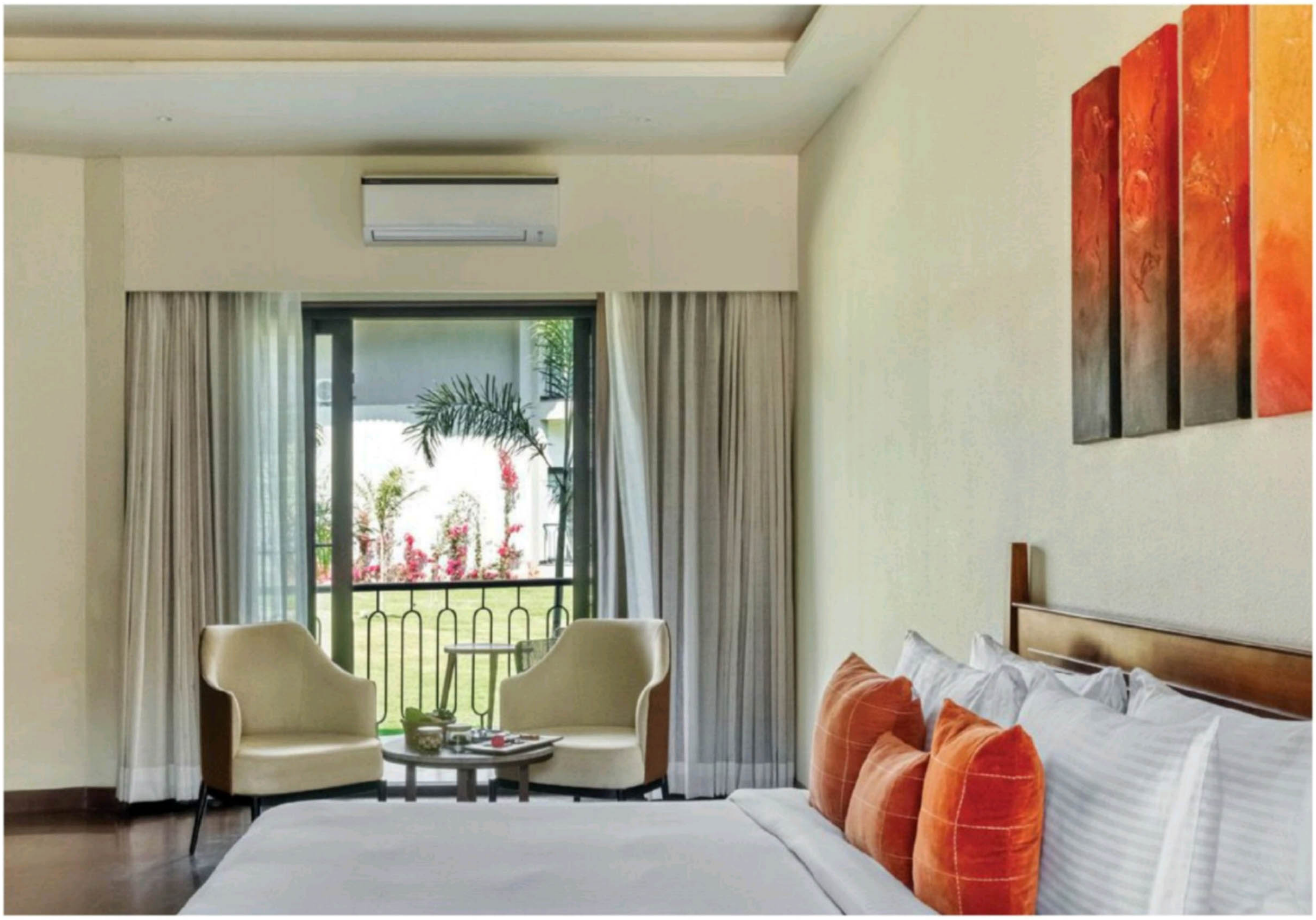
And perhaps this harmony with the land comes from a deeper, more personal connection with it.

"We acquired the land a few years ago," says Sanjay Goyal, managing director—Ananta Group. "But the seed of the idea was sown much earlier. Ajabgarh felt like a secret waiting to be honoured, not just discovered. It offered the kind of emotional topography—raw, mystical, intimate—that aligned perfectly with the Ananta philosophy. For my family, it wasn't just about hospitality—it was about homecoming."

Interestingly, Ajabgarh, once a fortified kingdom in the 17th century, still carries traces of its past. The fort stands tall, looking down on the village, a silent sentinel to history. But here's where it gets good—Ananta doesn't feel the need to mimic it. No faux balconies, no over-the-top courtyards. Just a whisper of restraint, allowing the resort to be what it is—an experience, not an imitation.



Inside, the palette is muted and mindful—terracotta, warm grey, and natural textures



The resort masterplan by Scarlette Designs is a walk-through wilderness, like an open road trip scene in a classic film—curved paths, uneven gradients, surprise views of the hills every now and then. No grid, no rigid lines—just the freedom of a place that knows exactly where it wants to go. It feels like the land is saying, 'Come on, follow me,' and the design happily obliges, like a good supporting character that just knows how to let the plot flow.

FOUR ELEMENTAL SCENES

The villas, grouped into four elemental clusters—Earth, Fire, Bamboo, and Lagoon—feel like four different chapters of a film. Each one tells its own story, with its own vibe. The architectural language across these clusters is deeply site-specific and materially honest. There are no unnecessary symbols, no forced drama—just clean, honest lines that speak for themselves. Each villa brings a fresh emotion, as though they're each in their own scene, but all part of the same story.

Let's talk about the Earth Villas—they're like the comforting, silent protagonist of the film. Inspired by the Rajasthani Bhonga huts, they're circular, fluid, and tactile. The thick rounded walls wrap you up like a warm hug, and the thatched roofs feel like they're sheltering you from the world. Inside? It's cool, calm, and quiet—like that perfect moment in the movie when the main character just finds peace, away from the chaos.

And then—boom—the Fire Villas hit you. Bold. Powerful. Geometric forms that make you do a double-take. Concrete planes rise like jagged rock formations, like something straight out of a high-octane thriller. They're not here for the subtlety. They're here to make a statement, with their angular facades and electric energy. But don't worry—the design knows when to soften the intensity, with khus grass and flowering shrubs that give it a much-needed cool-down after the heat of the action.

Then, there's the Bamboo Villas—this is the poetic, artsy montage scene of the film. It's all delicate, slender columns, inward-sloping roofs, and mandana stone pathways that make you feel like you've stepped into a grove. That sensitivity carried through to every decision—especially in the way each elemental villa cluster was conceptualised. It all began with a singular vision.

"The idea of bamboo villas came from a deeply symbolic place," shares Sanjay. "Bamboo represents resilience, grace and growth—all traits I believe define Ananta's journey. It bends but never breaks, it grows quickly yet silently, and it always stays rooted. That's the feeling we wanted Ajabgarh to evoke from the very first visual cue."

And finally—the Lagoon Villas. These are the dream sequence. Imagine the most serene shot in the movie, the one that makes you stop and just breathe in the beauty. Perched lightly on pillars above koi-filled ponds, these villas don't just sit there—they float. The water is their stage, and they're a seamless part of it. Classic cottages, yes, but with the kind of effortless grace that makes them feel like they grew straight out of the water. It's cinematic.

NATURE AS NARRATIVE

What became clear was how everything here had been designed to blend in. From the golden-hued limestone, to the rough granite in the lobby, every surface speaks of its proximity to the land. Unpolished stone floors, wooden ceilings, fabrics that breathe, and bronze-toned finishes create a feeling of organic assembly—nothing flashy, just perfectly in tune with its surroundings.

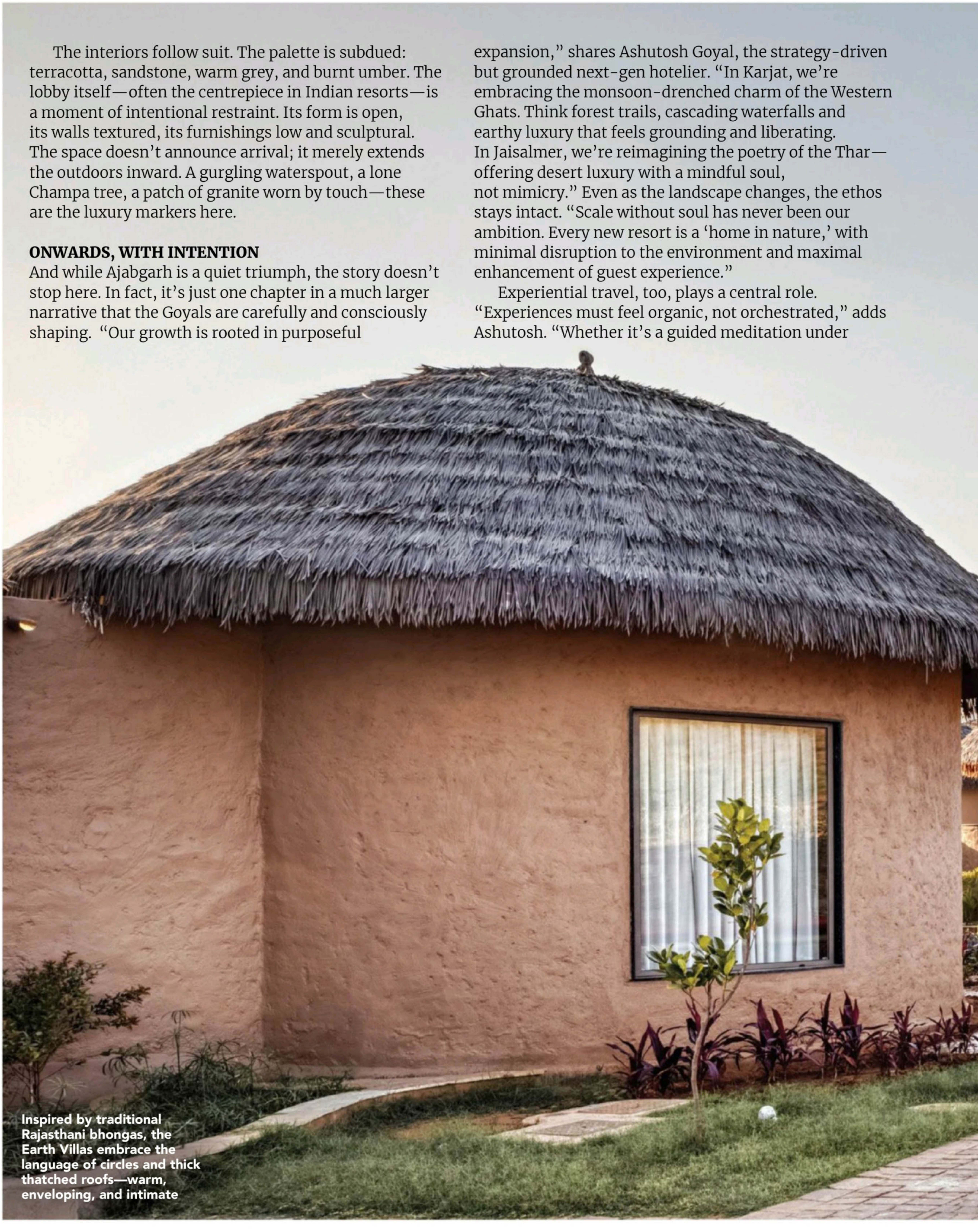
Floating gently above koi-filled lagoons, the Lagoon Villas are serene dreamscapes—cottages that appear to grow from water, evoking calm and lightness

The interiors follow suit. The palette is subdued: terracotta, sandstone, warm grey, and burnt umber. The lobby itself—often the centrepiece in Indian resorts—is a moment of intentional restraint. Its form is open, its walls textured, its furnishings low and sculptural. The space doesn't announce arrival; it merely extends the outdoors inward. A gurgling waterspout, a lone Champa tree, a patch of granite worn by touch—these are the luxury markers here.

ONWARDS, WITH INTENTION

And while Ajabgarh is a quiet triumph, the story doesn't stop here. In fact, it's just one chapter in a much larger narrative that the Goyals are carefully and consciously shaping. "Our growth is rooted in purposeful expansion," shares Ashutosh Goyal, the strategy-driven but grounded next-gen hotelier. "In Karjat, we're embracing the monsoon-drenched charm of the Western Ghats. Think forest trails, cascading waterfalls and earthy luxury that feels grounding and liberating. In Jaisalmer, we're reimagining the poetry of the Thar—offering desert luxury with a mindful soul, not mimicry." Even as the landscape changes, the ethos stays intact. "Scale without soul has never been our ambition. Every new resort is a 'home in nature,' with minimal disruption to the environment and maximal enhancement of guest experience."

Experiential travel, too, plays a central role. "Experiences must feel organic, not orchestrated," adds Ashutosh. "Whether it's a guided meditation under



Inspired by traditional Rajasthani bhongas, the Earth Villas embrace the language of circles and thick thatched roofs—warm, enveloping, and intimate

ancient trees or a silent dinner under the stars, our offerings are crafted to amplify connection—whether to place, people, or self."

LEGACY IN SPIRIT

And above all, there's an unmistakable spirit at Ananta—one that quietly threads through everything, from the masterplan to the smallest detail. That spirit begins with the family's patriarch.

"Inspiration flows when you remain curious, humble, and open to the world around you," says Mukund Goyal, the wisdom-rich chairman. "Even at 80, I find immense joy in observing—a tree growing on our property, a guest smiling quietly at sunrise, or a new idea brought to life by the next generation. These moments remind me that life, like hospitality, is about presence and purpose."

"For me, legacy isn't in stone or structure, but in spirit. If those who follow—my sons, my grandsons, our team—can continue to build with heart, respect the earth, and serve with sincerity, then my journey feels complete."

But perhaps what makes Ananta at Ajabgarh resonate most is its refusal to romanticise history. The legends of Princess Ratnavati or the ghost-town of Bhangarh remain part of the local lore, but they are not plastered across walls or re-enacted for effect. Instead, the design offers space for interpretation, imagination, and introspection.

And, crucially, sustainability is not treated as a checklist—but a quiet, functioning system. Water is harvested and redirected through lagoons.

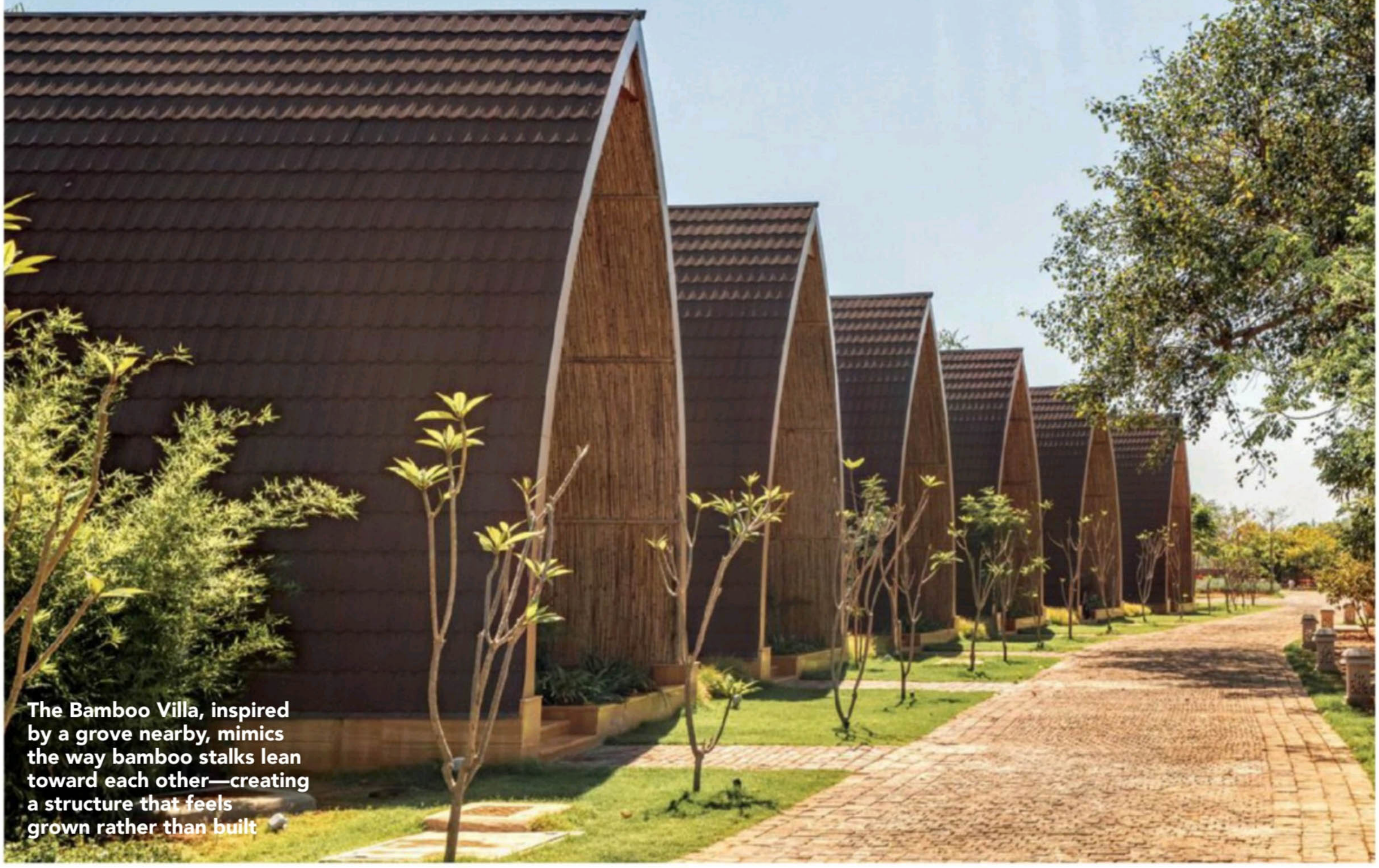
"IN KARJAT, WE'RE EMBRACING THE MONSOON-DRENCHED CHARM OF THE WESTERN GHATS. THINK FOREST TRAILS, CASCADING WATERFALLS AND EARTHY LUXURY THAT FEELS GROUNDING AND LIBERATING. IN JAISALMER, WE'RE REIMAGINING THE POETRY OF THE THAR—OFFERING DESERT LUXURY WITH A MINDFUL SOUL, NOT MIMICRY."

—ASHUTOSH GOYAL, Director, Ananta Group

Rather than recreate Rajasthan's royal legacy, the Goyals reframe it—building sanctuaries where silence, sustainability, and soulfulness take centre stage

"AJABGARH FELT LIKE A SECRET WAITING TO BE HONOURED, NOT JUST DISCOVERED. IT OFFERED THE KIND OF EMOTIONAL TOPOGRAPHY—RAW, MYSTICAL, INTIMATE—THAT ALIGNED PERFECTLY WITH THE ANANTA PHILOSOPHY. FOR MY FAMILY, IT WASN'T JUST ABOUT HOSPITALITY—IT WAS ABOUT HOMECOMING."

—SANJAY GOYAL, Managing Director, Ananta Group



The Bamboo Villa, inspired by a grove nearby, mimics the way bamboo stalks lean toward each other—creating a structure that feels grown rather than built

Natural cooling techniques reduce dependence on air-conditioning. Native plants outnumber ornamental ones. There is no greenwashing here—only discreet, thoughtful interventions that allow the land to breathe.

A NEW STANDARD FOR HOSPITALITY DESIGN

In many ways, Ananta Spa & Resort, Ajabgarh, introduces a new vocabulary to Indian luxury hospitality—one that is less about legacy and more about landscape. With its brutalist elegance and desert stillness, the resort doesn't seek borrowed legitimacy. It belongs wholly to its place. And that, in itself, is its greatest accomplishment.

At dusk, when the air thins and the Aravallis turn a deeper shade of gold, the resort seems to retreat further into itself. Lanterns begin to glow. Footsteps soften. And for a moment, everything is perfectly aligned: the land, the structure, and the silence in between.

As we race toward Jaipur, the outlines of the Aravallis now dark against the night sky, my mind drifts back to those quiet moments at Ananta. The photographs may capture the beauty—but they will never fully convey the stillness. The subtle hum of a place so connected to its surroundings that it feels timeless, beyond fleeting trends or temporary fashion.

In a world where so many seek to create impressions, Ananta Ajabgarh's true luxury lies in its quiet resilience. It is a place that doesn't try to impress—it simply is, in the most profound way possible.

And as the plane ascends, leaving behind the vastness of Rajasthan's skies, I realise I have just witnessed something rare: a retreat that has mastered the art of belonging, where every element feels part of something larger. The legacy of Ajabgarh may have faded in time, but at Ananta, it has found a new voice—one that whispers rather than shouts, inviting you to listen.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF ESCAPE

A hotel can offer comfort, even beauty. But the rare ones offer clarity. This special feature is about those rare ones—where design is not decorative but deliberate, and the experience is written in atmosphere, not adjectives

BY ANKITA RATHOD

The most memorable hotels aren't always the loudest. Sometimes, they're the ones that barely raise their voice—the ones that slow you down before you realise you've been rushing. That sense of pause, of presence, of place—that's the quiet thread running through this feature.

We begin with the Quiet Icons. Hotels that resist the urge to perform. They don't compete with their setting—they yield to it. They are made of moss and mist, of sloped stone paths and silence. Think Kyoto, think Bandhavgarh, think Ubud. In these spaces, architecture doesn't frame the view. It disappears into it.

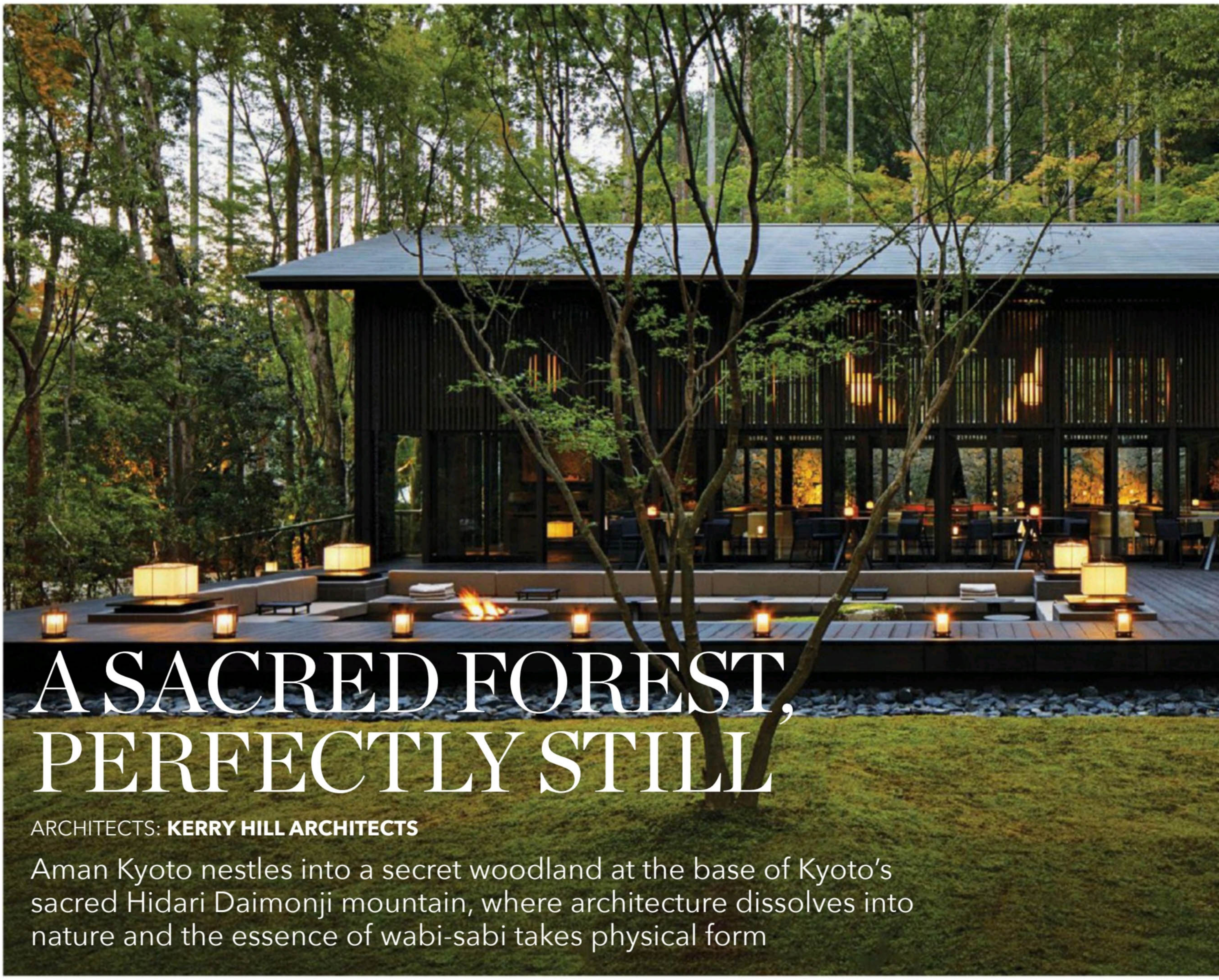
Next, we step into the Living Galleries. Here, the art is not an afterthought—it's the narrative. Donald Baechler collages in Zurich. Philippe Starck surrealism in Paris. A pastel by Nicolas Party greeting you like an old friend at breakfast. These are hotels where you live with the collection. Where curation isn't contained in a white cube, but woven into the experience.

And then, the Unconventionally Unique. The hotels that break the mould, sometimes literally. A 3D-printed desert pod in Marfa. A glass igloo beneath the northern lights. A submerged hotel built into a Chinese quarry. They're bold, improbable, and refreshingly uncynical. Because sometimes, imagination is the most sustainable material of all.

This isn't a list of where to stay. It's a meditation on how to stay. On why space matters. On what it means when a room, a view, a material choice makes you feel something without trying too hard. These hotels don't just accommodate you. They recalibrate you.

And that's the kind of escape worth writing about.

QUIET ICONS ▶ LIVING GALLERIES ▶ NEW AGE ORIGINALS



A SACRED FOREST, PERFECTLY STILL

ARCHITECTS: **KERRY HILL ARCHITECTS**

Aman Kyoto nestles into a secret woodland at the base of Kyoto's sacred Hidari Daimonji mountain, where architecture dissolves into nature and the essence of wabi-sabi takes physical form

There is a reverence that hangs in the air at Aman Kyoto—an almost imperceptible stillness that humbles you as you enter. Tucked into an ancient forest that once belonged to a textile magnate's abandoned garden project, the resort whispers rather than shouts, its architecture barely visible at first glance. This sense of quiet unveiling is intentional. For Kerry Hill Architects, the challenge was not to build on the land, but to listen to it.

→ A LANDSCAPE-LED MASTERPLAN

The 80-acre site is located in the north of Kyoto, near the famed Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion), and is a hidden gem in a city already steeped in ritual and history. The design embraces the natural sloping topography, winding stone paths, and moss-covered gardens that already existed, using them as the framework around which the architecture is gently arranged.

Pavilions housing the guest suites appear like shadows between cedar and momiji trees. Built with steel framing, blackened sugi (Japanese cedar), and granite, they are long, low, and deliberately restrained. Deep eaves and timber decks hover above the mossy floor, inviting nature to flow in and around. Nothing interrupts the natural order.

→ A STUDY IN WABI-SABI MINIMALISM

Inside, the suites mirror traditional ryokan proportions but are contemporised in line with Aman's pared-down DNA. Chestnut floors, washi paper screens, and hinoki wood bathtubs offer tactile cues rooted in Japanese craftsmanship. The palette is subdued: warm timber, soft earth tones, and the occasional contrast of stone. Spaces unfold rhythmically, choreographed around

shifting light and views of foliage that change with the seasons.

Every design move speaks to wabi-sabi—the Japanese aesthetic of impermanence and imperfection. Floor-to-ceiling glass panels frame scenes of wind-rustled maple trees or snowfall on moss. Tatami-inspired rugs define zones of movement and meditation. Minimalist furnishings are custom designed in natural materials, allowing texture and form to take precedence over ornamentation.

STRIKING FEATURE

Landscape Integration: *A network of shadow-like pavilions built into an untouched moss garden, where architecture becomes indistinguishable from the forest.*

→ ARCHITECTURE AS SILENCE

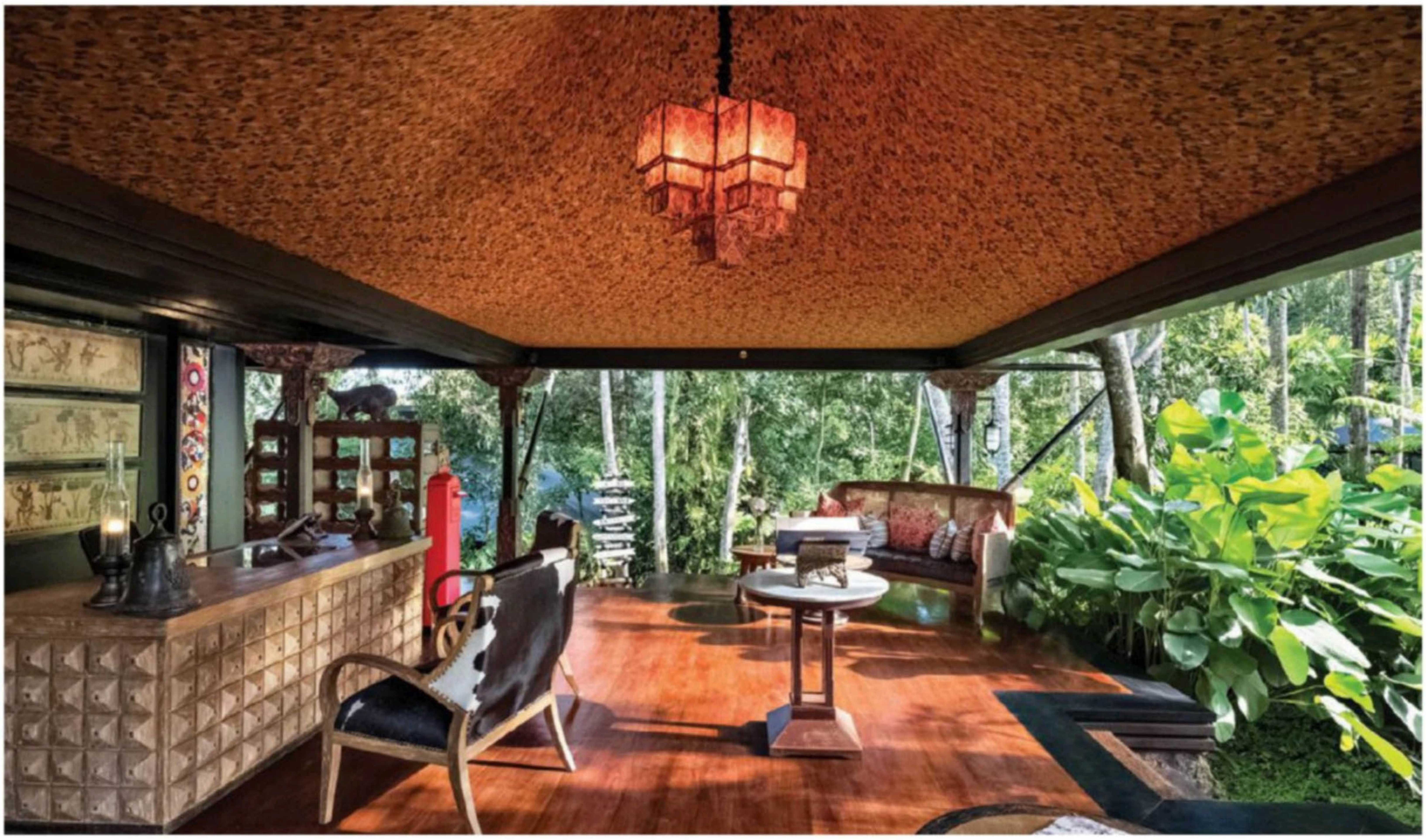
Aman Kyoto is not about spectacle. It's about clarity. And nowhere is that more evident than in the public spaces. The Living Pavilion, Aman's version of a lobby lounge, features a fireplace centred around a granite hearth and walls that retract entirely to dissolve into the forest beyond. Afternoon tea here feels more like a spiritual practice than a ritual indulgence.

The resort is also quietly sustainable. Buildings were positioned to avoid tree felling. Lighting is kept deliberately low, preserving the nocturnal rhythm of local wildlife. Materials were sourced locally—stone from Shiga, timber from Kyoto—and constructed using minimal intervention techniques that echo traditional Japanese joinery. In more than many ways, Aman Kyoto is a meditation on how to build less, mean more, and disappear beautifully. It doesn't impose itself on the landscape—it becomes part of it. ✚

A JUNGLE DREAM, SUSPENDED IN TIME

ARCHITECT: **BILL BENSLEY**

In the dense rainforests of Bali's Keliki Valley, Capella Ubud balances theatricality with restraint—an ultra-luxury tented camp where design yields to the wild, and storytelling is woven into the very fabric of the forest



Capella Ubud is not the Bali you've seen on postcards. Hidden within a densely forested ridge in the sacred Keliki Valley near Ubud, this resort does not sprawl or overtake. Instead, it tucks itself quietly into the terrain, camouflaged by banyan trees, bamboo groves, and creeping vines. Designed by the ever-irreverent Bill Bensley, Capella Ubud is a masterclass in maximalist restraint—a phrase that sounds contradictory until you experience it firsthand.

→ ARCHITECTURE THAT FOLLOWS THE JUNGLE'S LEAD

Built without removing a single tree, the property features 22 luxurious tents that appear to float among the foliage. Each is connected by narrow suspension bridges that meander through the jungle canopy, reinforcing the feeling of walking through a film set—albeit one grounded in reverence for its natural context. The structures rest on lightly anchored platforms, designed to leave the forest floor untouched. The result is architecture that doesn't sit on the land, but with it.

→ NARRATIVE, LAYERED AND LUSH

While Capella's design is immersive, it's also richly narrative. Bensley was inspired by the lives of early European settlers in 19th-century Bali, and each tented suite is themed accordingly—The Cartographer's Tent, The Explorer's Tent, The Naturalist's Tent. Interiors burst with character: vintage steamer trunks, copper clawfoot bathtubs, carved Javanese antiques, hand-dyed batiks, and hundreds of objets d'art, all individually sourced. Yet nothing feels forced. The story flows from room to room, as fluid as the nearby Wos River.

→ WHERE DECADENCE MEETS DISCRETION

Despite the drama of its detailing, Capella Ubud is ultimately a place of solitude and stillness. Each suite has its own saltwater plunge pool overlooking the jungle. Open-air bathrooms invite the elements in. Beds are framed in gauzy canopies that shift in the breeze. By day, you hear cicadas and birdsong. By night, the jungle hums with unseen life. The architecture becomes a silent observer.

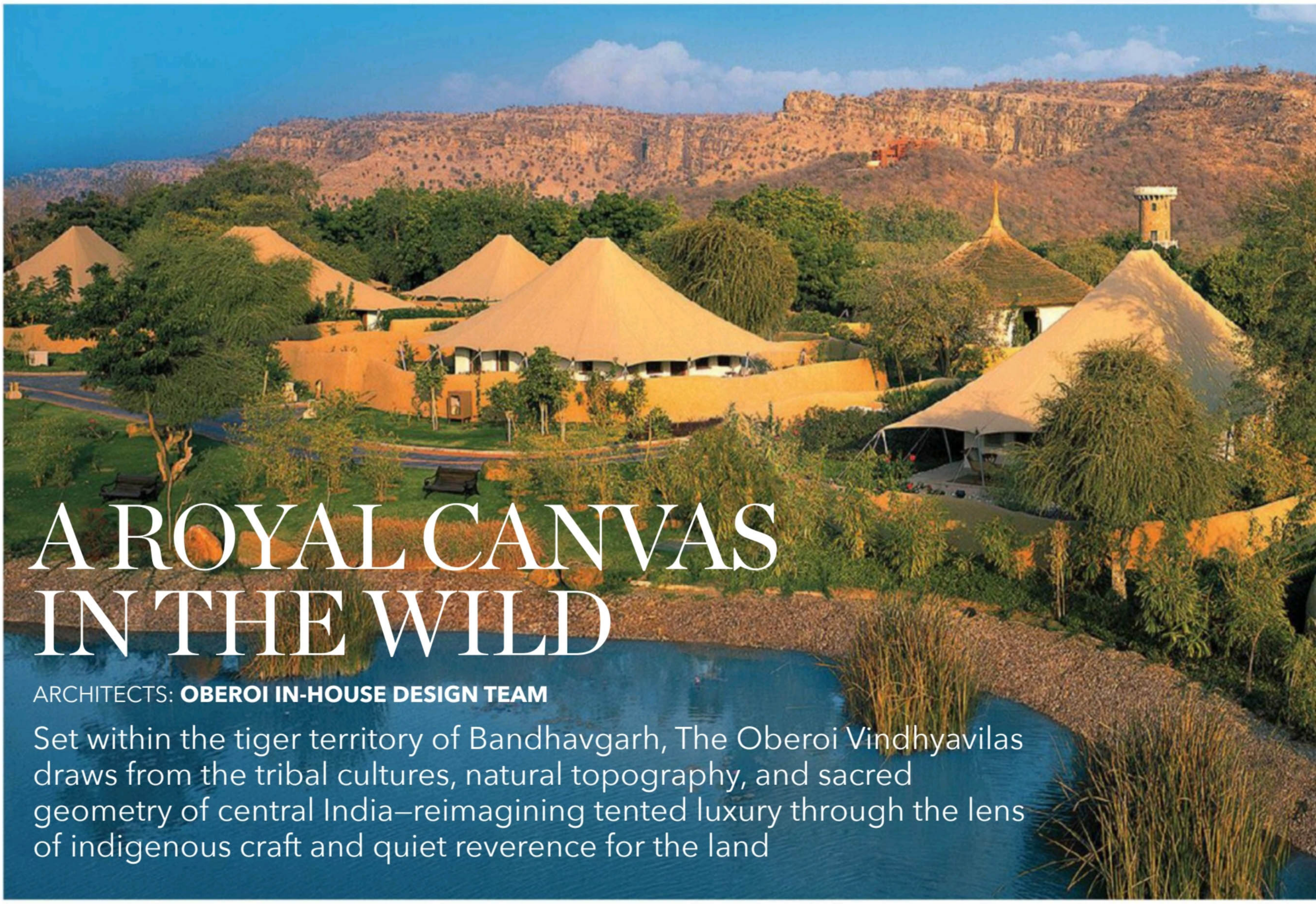
STRIKING FEATURE

Wellness & Spa Experience: *The Auriga Spa, hidden among the trees, offers Balinese healing rituals in tented treatment rooms that dissolve into the jungle canopy.*

→ ROOTED IN RITUAL AND ECOLOGY

Sustainability here isn't aesthetic—it's embedded. From solar-powered lighting and water filtration systems to the resort's zero single-use plastic policy, the impact on the environment is minimised without compromising guest experience. Local craftspeople were engaged throughout the design and build process, using reclaimed teak, bamboo, and volcanic stone to ensure material continuity with the land. Every decision—from the elevation of the tent platforms to the biodegradable amenities—was made to preserve the integrity of the rainforest.

Capella Ubud is a fantasy that honours its setting—a deeply personal, theatrical, and tactile experience that allows the land to take the lead while letting imagination run free. ✣



A ROYAL CANVAS IN THE WILD

ARCHITECTS: **OBEROI IN-HOUSE DESIGN TEAM**

Set within the tiger territory of Bandhavgarh, The Oberoi Vindhyavilas draws from the tribal cultures, natural topography, and sacred geometry of central India–reimagining tented luxury through the lens of indigenous craft and quiet reverence for the land

While most wilderness resorts aim for immersion, The Oberoi Vindhyavilas Wildlife Resort achieves something more considered—it creates resonance. Located just minutes from the core zone of Bandhavgarh National Park, the 21-acre resort explores how architecture can respond to place not through mimicry or camouflage, but through memory, materiality, and quiet monumentality.

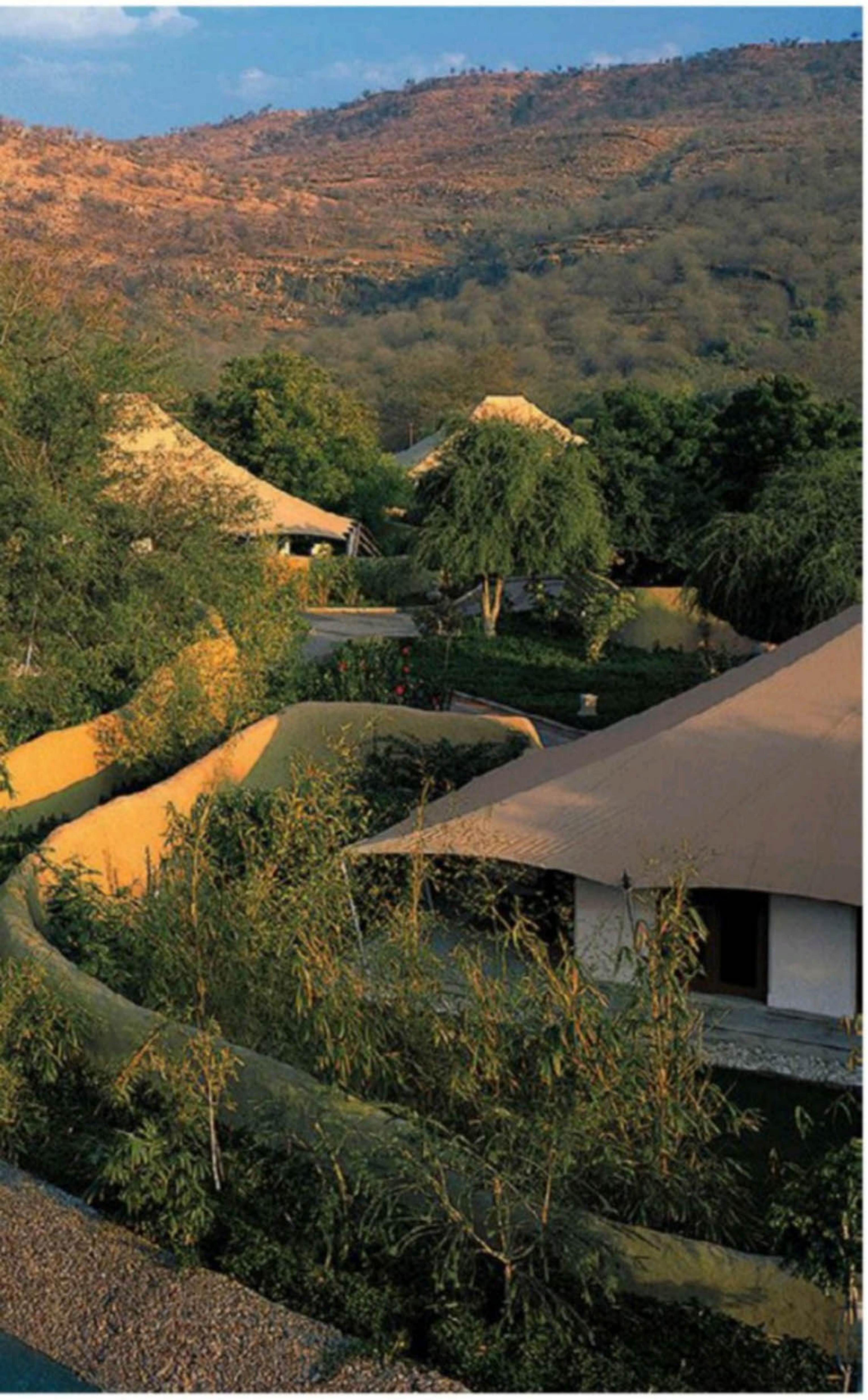
→ LAND AS MUSE

Taking cues from the sacred topography of the Vindhya ranges and the tribal cultures that have shaped the region's visual language for centuries, the design of The Oberoi Vindhyavilas begins with a powerful gesture: a towering teakwood door carved by Gond artisans—a threshold that announces both reverence and intent. Beyond it, a soaring lounge lined with local Katni stone and washed in natural light opens gradually, designed less as a hotel lobby and more as a modern-day baithak.

This first space sets the tone: earth-toned materials, scale without spectacle, and a design rhythm that prefers pause to procession. The palette is pale, but never cold—soft beiges, hand-chiselled textures, and brass accents combine to create a refined neutrality that allows tribal artworks to breathe.

→ TENTED LIVING, REINTERPRETED

The resort's 19 luxury tents and two villas are arranged to follow the natural contours of the forest. Each tent rests on a raised plinth of hand-cut stone—both for practical flood protection and as a visual nod to ceremonial chhatris. Scalloped canvas roofs, muslin-draped four-poster beds, and woven textiles recall the royal caravans of central India, while the architectural form remains intentionally restrained. Inside, design meets storytelling. Gond murals animate the walls, while the bath areas—each with a marble vanity and arched window—feature wildlife paintings by Rakesh Prajapati, a local artist capturing the region's mythic intimacy with nature. Wide glass doors open to floating decks and private gardens planted with fountain grass, jasmine, and flowering kachnar trees—blurring the lines between architecture and wildness, enclosure and openness.



Photographs Courtesy: www.andbeyond.com

→ A GASTRONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Design extends into the resort's culinary programme, led by Executive Chef Sachin Kumar, who trained with the Royal Kitchen of Nagod. His approach is not just regional—it's architectural. Menus are built around heirloom grains, forest-grown spices, and slow-cooked stews from the Baghelkhand repertoire.

Dining becomes part of the spatial choreography: morning tea is served beneath sal trees; bonfire feasts unfold at the Tree Court; and The Bush Kitchen—set by the lake—offers al fresco grills under a starlit canopy. The Royal Baghelkhand Dinner, a multi-course homage served on silver thalis, is staged as a ritual performance, complete with tribal percussion and traditional dress.

STRIKING FEATURE

Craft & Detailing: *Hand-carved Gond motifs on teakwood doors, tribal murals by local artisans, and tented suites with private floating decks surrounded by flowering kachnar trees.*

→ DESIGN IN DIALOGUE WITH ECOLOGY

Environmental sensitivity runs through the project's bones. Stone-paved pathways are designed for water percolation. The lighting scheme uses only warm, downward-facing luminaires to preserve nocturnal habitats. Buildings are sited to retain as many mature trees as possible. Even the decks were designed around existing root systems, allowing the forest to dictate form.

The resort's upcoming wellness wing continues this ethos. Planned as a series of indoor-outdoor pavilions, it will feature local stone, natural ventilation, and forest-view therapy rooms offering Ayurvedic treatments, outdoor yoga, and guided meditation.

→ CULTURAL ARCHITECTURE

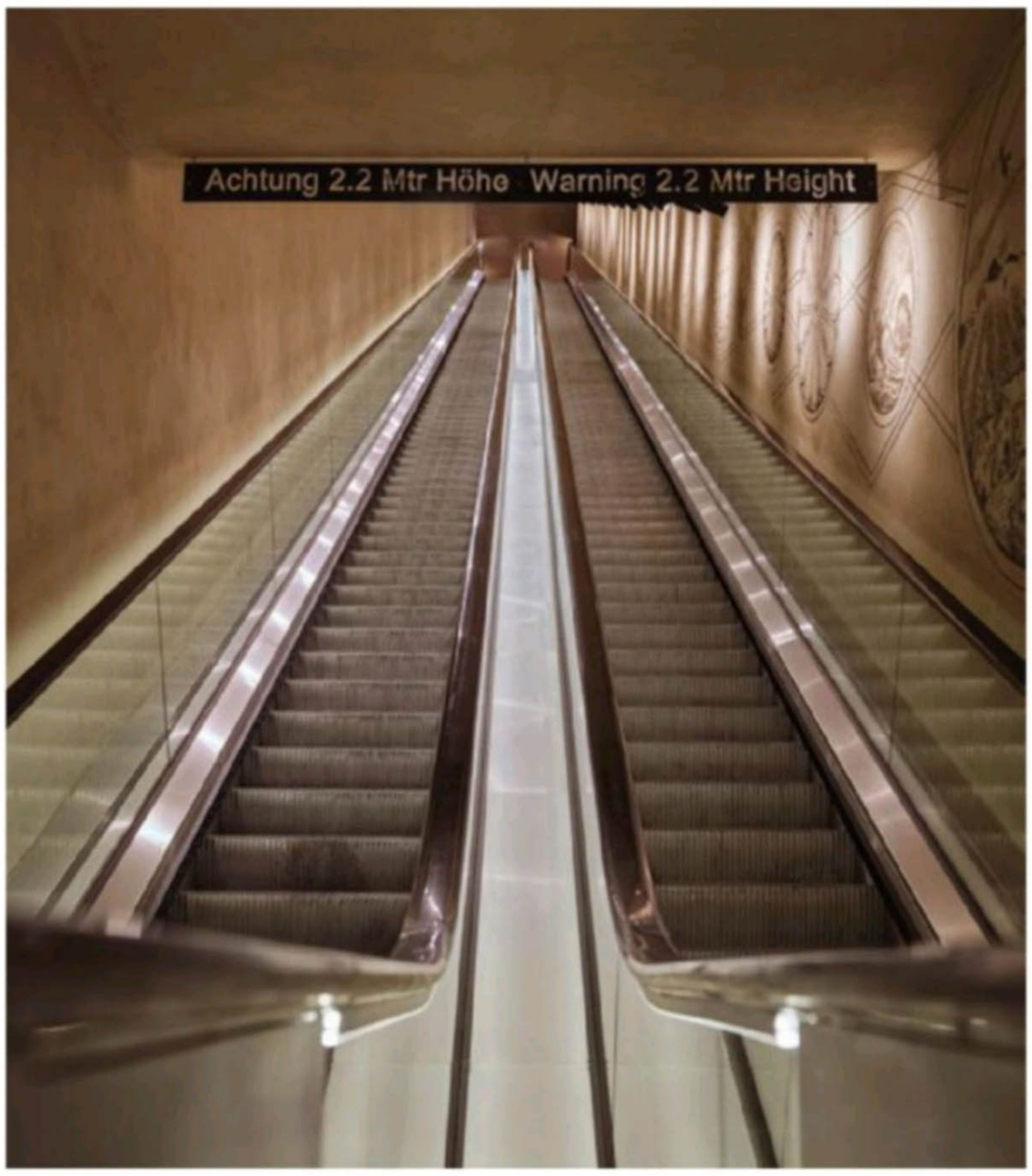
At The Oberoi Vindhyavilas, design becomes a conduit for cultural connection. Guests can meet Gond artist Sukhiram in the on-site atelier, walk through Sarmaniya village, or attend storytelling sessions in an open-air baithak inspired by tribal gathering spaces.

These experiences aren't decorative—they're embedded in the architecture, transforming the resort into a space of cultural exchange. Here, luxury is not an aesthetic overlay, but a thoughtful response to land, lineage, and the quiet authority of place. ✚

A SCULPTED STILLNESS IN THE SWISS ALPS

ARCHITECTS: **ACPV ARCHITECTS (ANTONIO CITTERIO PATRICIA VIEL)**

In the pristine landscape of St. Moritz, Badrutt's Palace quietly expands its legacy. The new Serlas Wing blends centuries through architecture that listens—to history, to setting, to silence



Badrutt's Palace is steeped in alpine lore, but its latest architectural gesture is anything but traditional. With the unveiling of the Serlas Wing, the iconic hotel doesn't reach upward or outward—it reaches inward. Designed by ACPV Architects, this extension is subtle in spirit, modern in language, and reverent in placement. It tucks itself into the mountainside like a considered footnote rather than a headline—an exercise in quiet precision that lets the land lead.

→ FOLLOWING THE MOUNTAIN'S LEAD

The Serlas Wing is not an imposition—it's an echo. Connected to the historic core of Badrutt's by a discreet subterranean tunnel and an extraordinary hotel escalator that glides beneath the Engadin soil, the new wing feels like it's always been there. Constructed using locally attuned materials—stone, timber, bronze-toned accents—it mirrors the colour palette of the surrounding valley. Its structure, though resolutely modern, is softened by shadow play and symmetry, revealing itself slowly and purposefully as guests move through it.

→ NARRATIVE, UNDERSTATED AND ENDURING

There are no ornate chandeliers or grand ballrooms here. Instead, the Serlas Wing tells its story through restraint. Each room is designed as a frame to the landscape—with sculptural furniture, and soft-toned interiors that allow the outdoors to pour in uninterrupted. The design is deliberate, serene, and deeply tactile. It doesn't speak in architectural flourishes—it hums in long lines and clean edges, in thick stone thresholds and warm wooden floors.

→ WHERE MODERNITY MEETS MEMORY

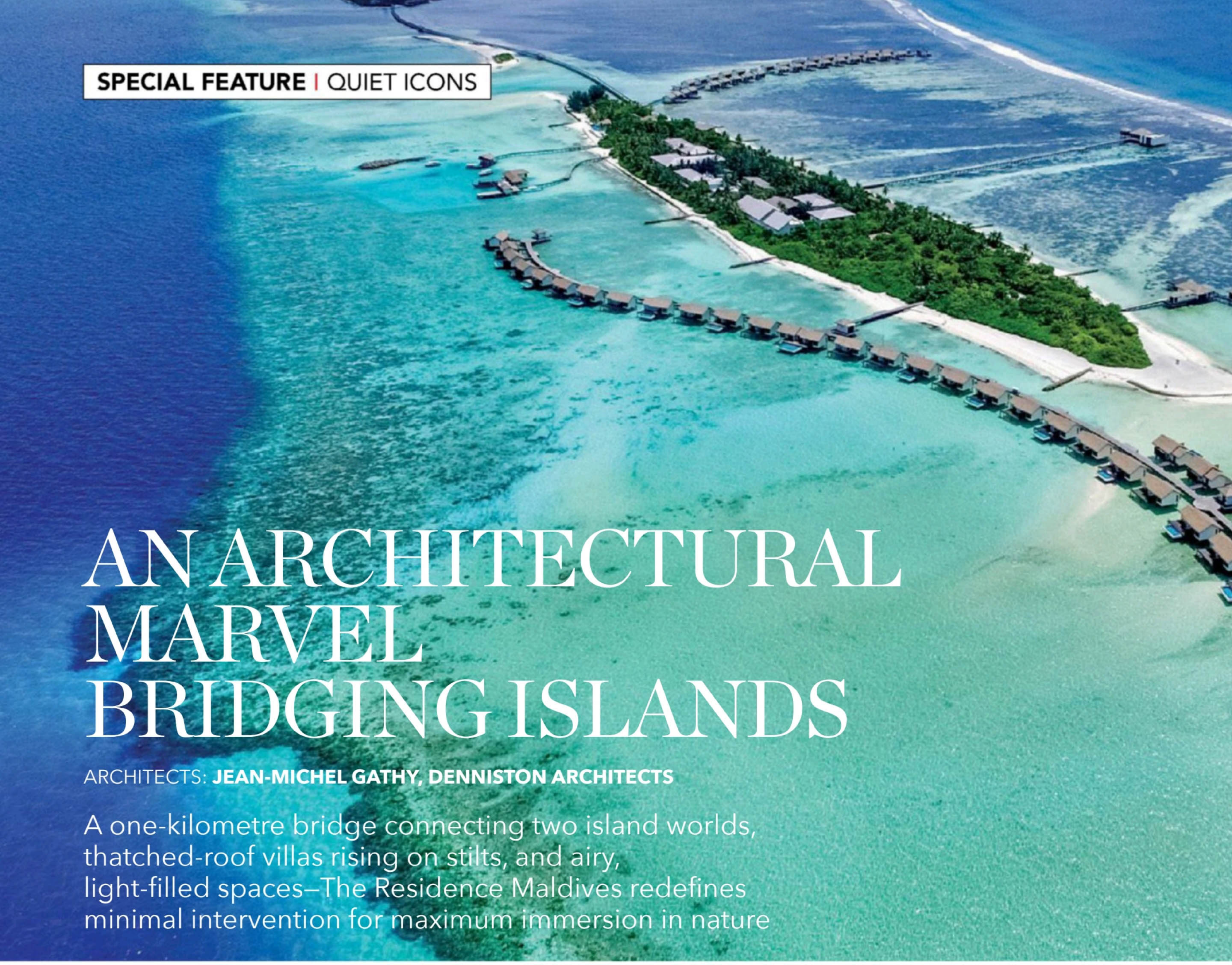
Even in its newest form, Badrutt's is never unmoored from its past. The Serlas Wing may be contemporary, but it never breaks rhythm with the hotel's lineage. It complements rather than contrasts—folding into a visual and spatial dialogue with Chesa Veglia, the 17th-century farmhouse, and the Belle Époque charm of the original hotel. Here, time is layered, not linear, and the experience is one of continuity, not contrast.

STRIKING FEATURE

Architectural Continuum: *The Serlas Wing connects a 17th-century farmhouse, a 19th-century Grand Hotel, and a 21st-century contemporary addition through one of the longest hotel escalators in the world–blurring eras with grace, not grandeur.*

→ ENDURING QUIET CRAFT

This isn't architecture for the Instagram moment. It's architecture for the second glance—for those who notice how the ceiling line follows the ridgeline outside, how the materials echo the texture of the alpine rock. With this project, ACPV marks its first hotel in Switzerland, offering not just rooms, but a refined philosophy: that good design doesn't always dazzle. Sometimes, it simply belongs. Badrutt's Serlas Wing is a soft triumph—one that allows the guest, the history, and the view to take centre stage. Quiet, layered, enduring—this is where mountain stillness becomes architecture.



AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL BRIDGING ISLANDS

ARCHITECTS: **JEAN-MICHEL GATHY, DENNISTON ARCHITECTS**

A one-kilometre bridge connecting two island worlds, thatched-roof villas rising on stilts, and airy, light-filled spaces–The Residence Maldives redefines minimal intervention for maximum immersion in nature

Few destinations evoke the sense of an unspoiled paradise quite like the Maldives. This chain of coral atolls in the Indian Ocean, with its sugar-white beaches, cerulean waters, and lush tropical foliage, has long been the ultimate getaway for those seeking seclusion and luxury. Nestled within this idyllic landscape is The Residence Maldives, a resort that redefines barefoot luxury, seamlessly blending contemporary architecture with the raw beauty of nature.

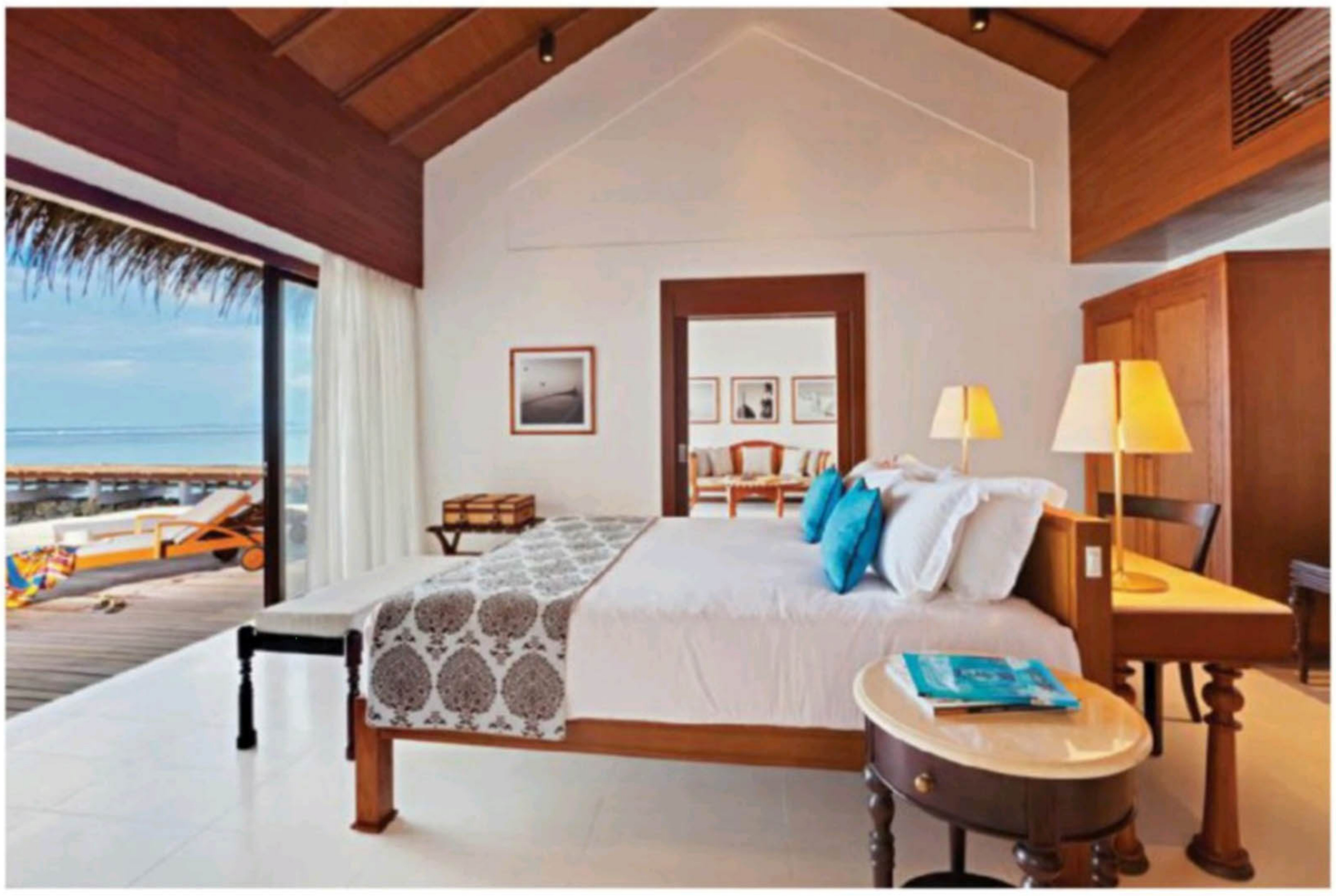
As you cruise along the one-kilometre bridge—the longest of its kind in the Maldives—it becomes clear that this is more than an architectural feat. Spanning the atoll and linking Dhigurah and Falhumaafushi, the bridge embodies a radical rethinking of Maldivian luxury, where movement is effortless, where the journey itself is as extraordinary as the destination. This passage redefines the notion of island seclusion, allowing guests to experience two distinct landscapes in a single, seamless retreat.

→ THE FALHUMAAFUSHI-DHIGURAH BRIDGE

One of the most striking achievements of The Residence Maldives is its ability to merge two islands into a singular, cohesive experience. Designed by Singapore-based firm ECO-ID Architects, this one-kilometre bridge forms part of one of the Maldives' largest resort developments.

Stretching over crystalline waters, the bridge is elevated to preserve the delicate coral ecosystem below while offering unobstructed views of the Indian Ocean. Guests can cycle or stroll across, with nothing but the sound of the breeze rushing past and the rhythmic crash of waves below. At night, soft lighting illuminates the pathway, making the journey between the islands a sensory experience of its own—where the moon reflects off the water, and the sea whispers beneath your feet.

With sustainability at its core, the resort is designed to preserve, not disrupt. Solar panels power much of the island, a desalination unit minimises freshwater use, and native plant species have been reintroduced to restore natural biodiversity. Even the bridge—this vast stretch of human ingenuity—was built to respect the ocean beneath it, ensuring that the reefs and currents remain untouched.



A DESIGN LANGUAGE THAT SPEAKS TO THE SEA

Spread across 173 spacious beach and overwater villas, the resort is designed to be at one with its surroundings. Traditional Maldivian craftsmanship meets contemporary elegance—thatched roofs, local teak, and coral stone blend seamlessly with floor-to-ceiling glass façades, allowing the ever-changing hues of the ocean to flood the interiors.

Expansive decks and private infinity pools create the illusion of merging with the lagoon, while slatted wooden screens filter in soft, dappled light, shifting with the sun. The architecture does not impose—it surrenders to the natural world, ensuring that guests remain immersed in their surroundings, whether indoors or out.

At the very edge of the jetty, where the sea and sky seem to blur into one, lies The Clarins Spa—a sanctuary suspended over water. Designed with open-air pavilions, the spa is shaped by its environment rather than confined by walls. Here, breezes rush through slatted screens, rattling softly as they collide with the sound of waves lapping beneath the floorboards. Six overwater suites offer unobstructed ocean views, allowing the elements to become part of the experience.

STRIKING FEATURE

Built Structure:

A one-kilometre private bridge–longest in the Maldives–that links two islands across a turquoise lagoon with minimal ecological impact.

THE ART OF SLOW LIVING

Life at The Residence Maldives moves to the tempo of the tides. Mornings begin with meditation on the floating deck, followed by breakfast served al fresco as the sea transforms from deep sapphire to translucent turquoise. Afternoons are spent snorkelling with manta rays and reef sharks, exploring untouched coral gardens, or retreating into the shade of a cabana with a book in hand.

By embracing sustainability, intelligent design, and the beauty of slow living, The Residence Maldives redefines what luxury means. Here, luxury is not excess—it is an invitation to reconnect. To be still. To let the ocean shape the experience.

SPECIAL FEATURE | LIVING GALLERIES

The Collectors Suites

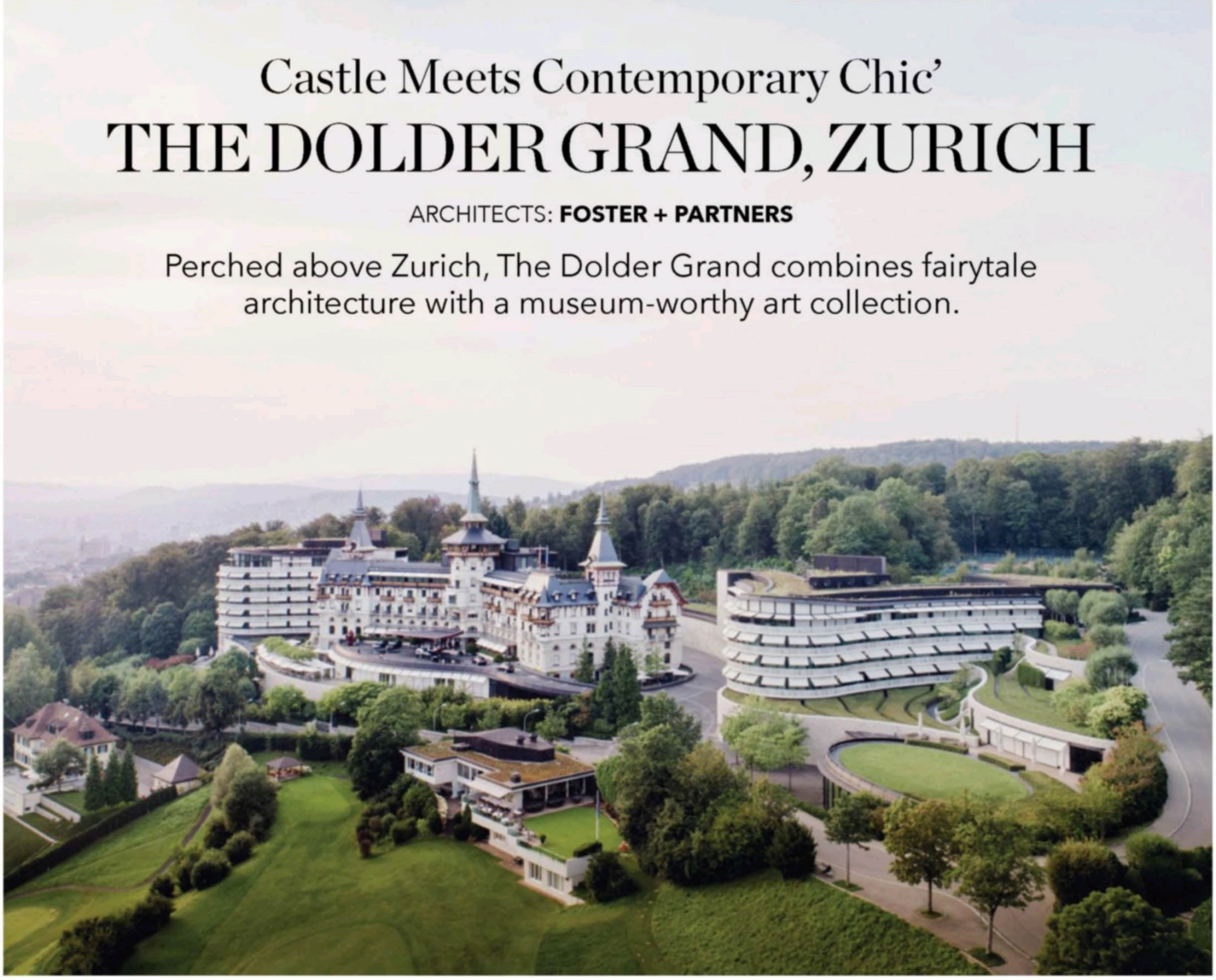
Once, art hung quietly behind red ropes – now, it's woven into wallpaper, embedded in bar menus, and waiting beside your bed at turndown...

Castle Meets Contemporary Chic’

THE DOLDER GRAND, ZURICH

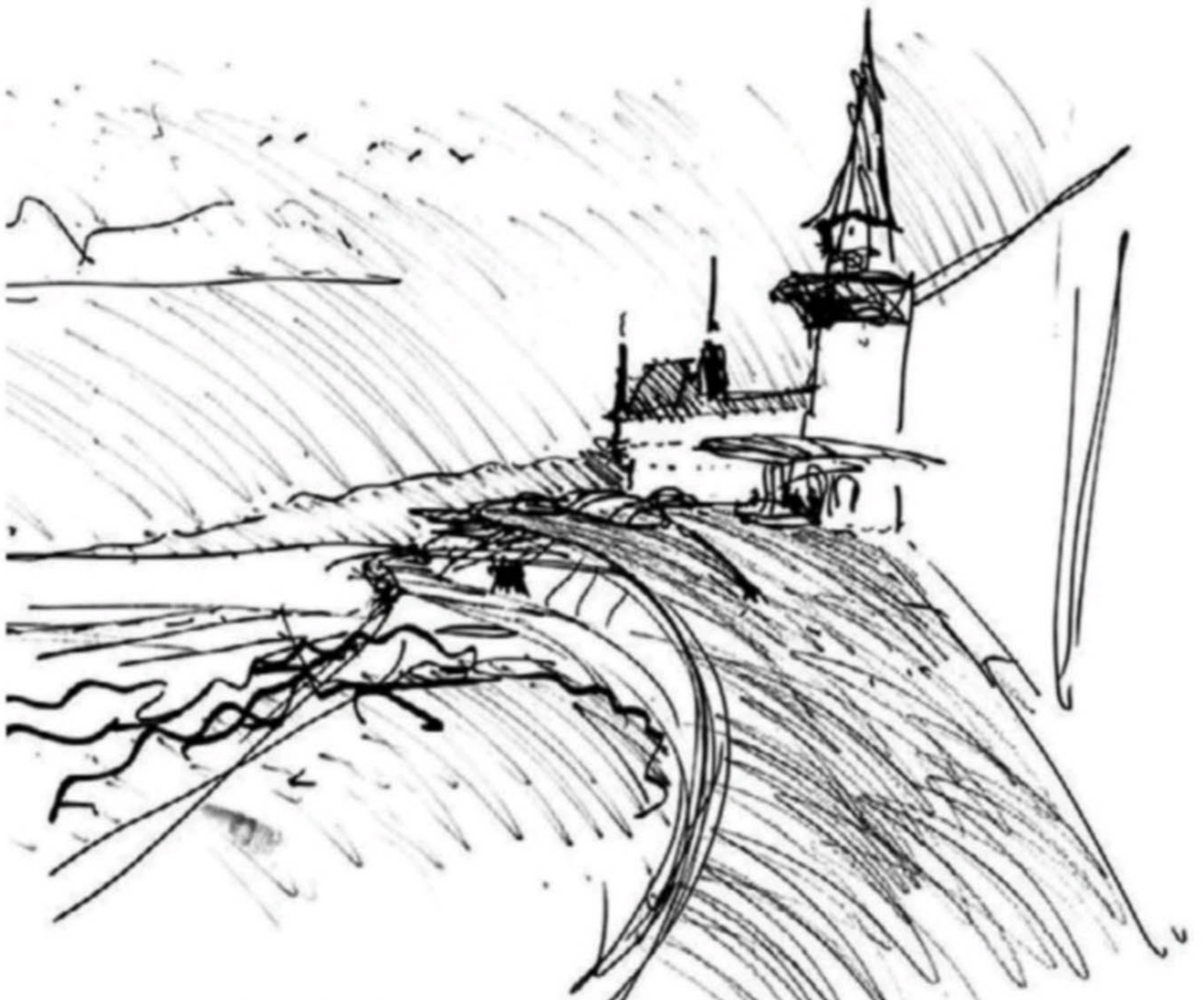
ARCHITECTS: **FOSTER + PARTNERS**

Perched above Zurich, The Dolder Grand combines fairytale architecture with a museum-worthy art collection.



Photograph Courtesy: www.thedoldergrand.com (©hieplerblunier)

Designed by Foster + Partners, The Dolder Grand is a hotel that wears two crowns: one of historic grandeur, and one of avant-garde boldness. Originally built in 1899 as a “curhaus,” the property was reimagined in the 2000s with striking new architectural wings that now house over 100 works by contemporary masters. Among them: Salvador Dalí’s dreamlike *Femmes métamorphosées – Les sept arts* and Takashi Murakami’s vibrant *DOB in the Strange Forest.* Curated by art consultant Gigi Kracht, the hotel offers iPad-led art tours, with elevators that open onto surprise masterpieces—from Fernando Botero’s voluptuous bronzes to Julian Schnabel’s expressive canvases. Also featured are Andy Warhol’s monumental *Big Retrospective Painting* and a gleaming stainless steel void by Anish Kapoor at the spa’s entrance—making the journey through The Dolder Grand as visually rich as the destination itself. ✚



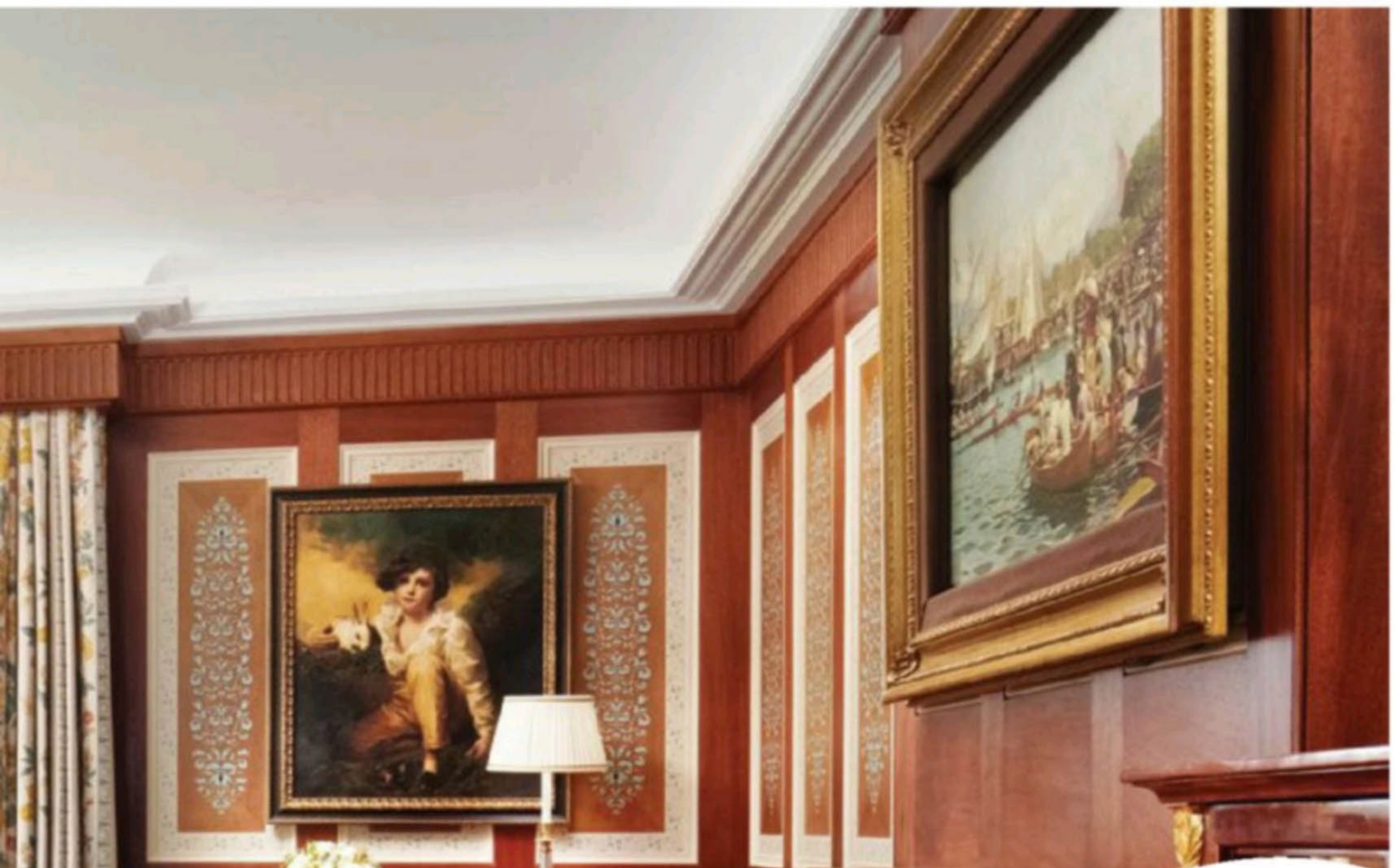
This was the first sketch by Norman Foster

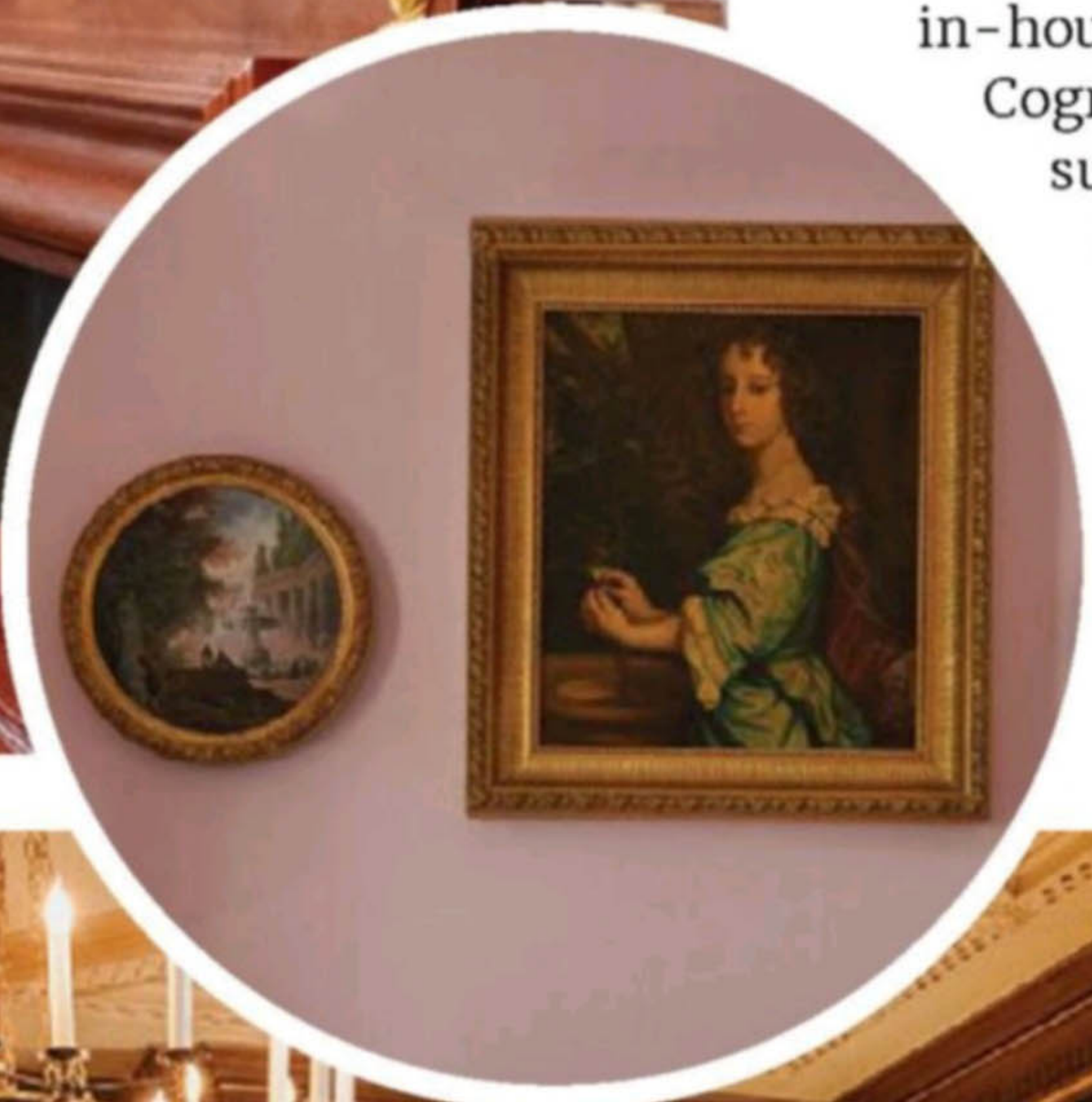
Not Your Average Grand Dame

THE LANESBOROUGH, LONDON

ARCHITECTS: **ALBERTO PINTO**

With rococo-inspired interiors and a curatorial eye for classical painting, The Lanesborough bridges aristocratic grandeur with contemporary cultural cachet





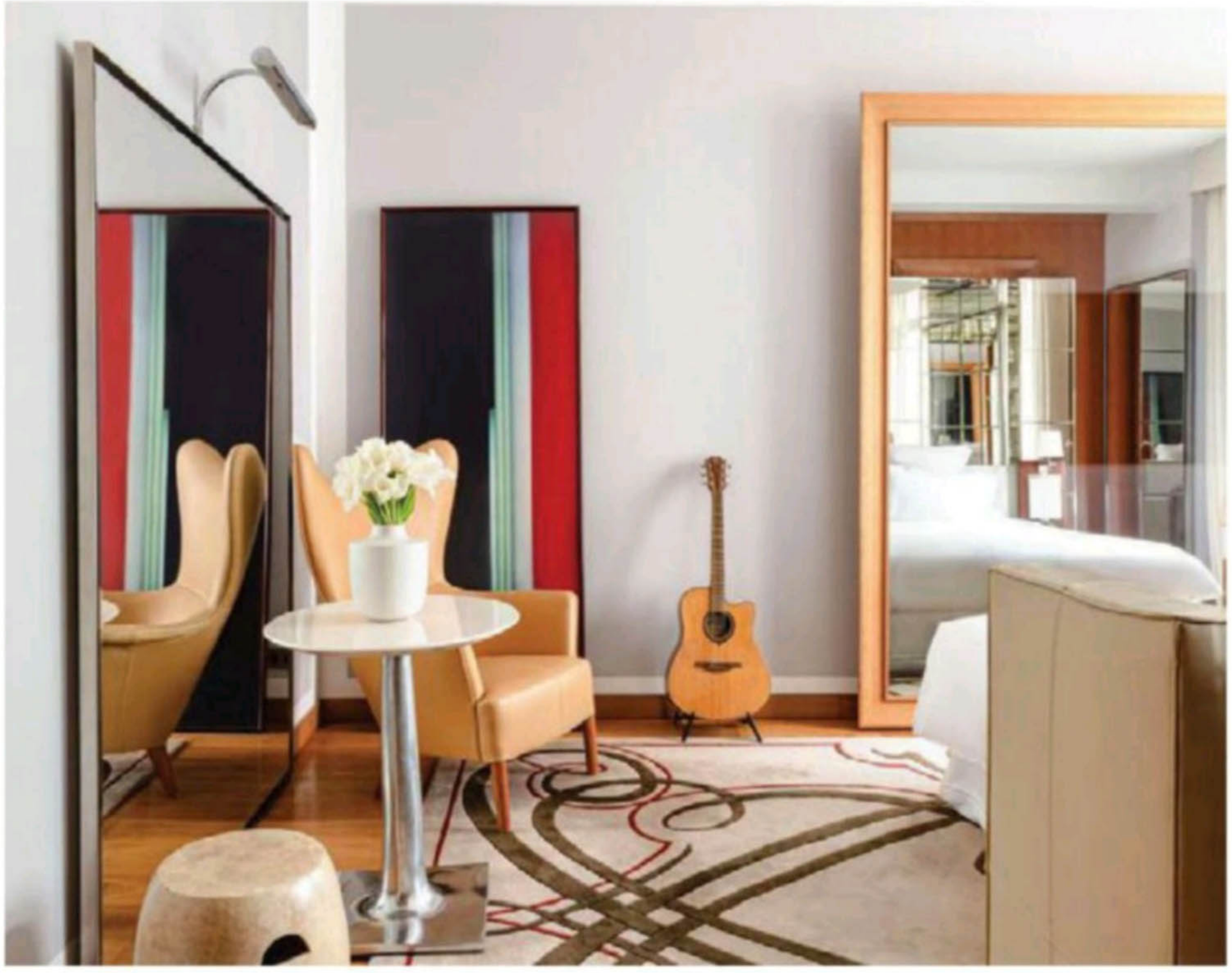
The Lanesborough may sit opposite Hyde Park in one of London's most aristocratic postcodes, but its spirit is anything but conventional. Reimagined by interior architect Alberto Pinto, this former hospital-turned-hotel layers neoclassical opulence with a private collection of European artworks, 18th-century portraiture, and striking modern sculpture. Vaulted ceilings gilded in gold leaf, velvet-canopied four-posters, and hand-painted trompe-l'œil murals transform the suites into theatrical, gallery-like spaces. Throughout the public areas, guests encounter curated works that nod to Dutch pastoral charm and contemporary British expression. The in-house Library Bar, known for its rare Cognacs and old-world elegance, subtly integrates art into its atmosphere. With occasional art-forward programming and collaborations with London's cultural tastemakers, The Lanesborough feels less like a hotel and more like a refined, live-in salon. ✚

A Parisian Playground of Surrealist Whimsy

LE ROYAL MONCEAU, RAFFLES PARIS

ARCHITECTS: **PHILIPPE STARCK**

Philippe Starck reimagines a classic Parisian hotel as a surrealist canvas, where art isn't just admired—it's lived

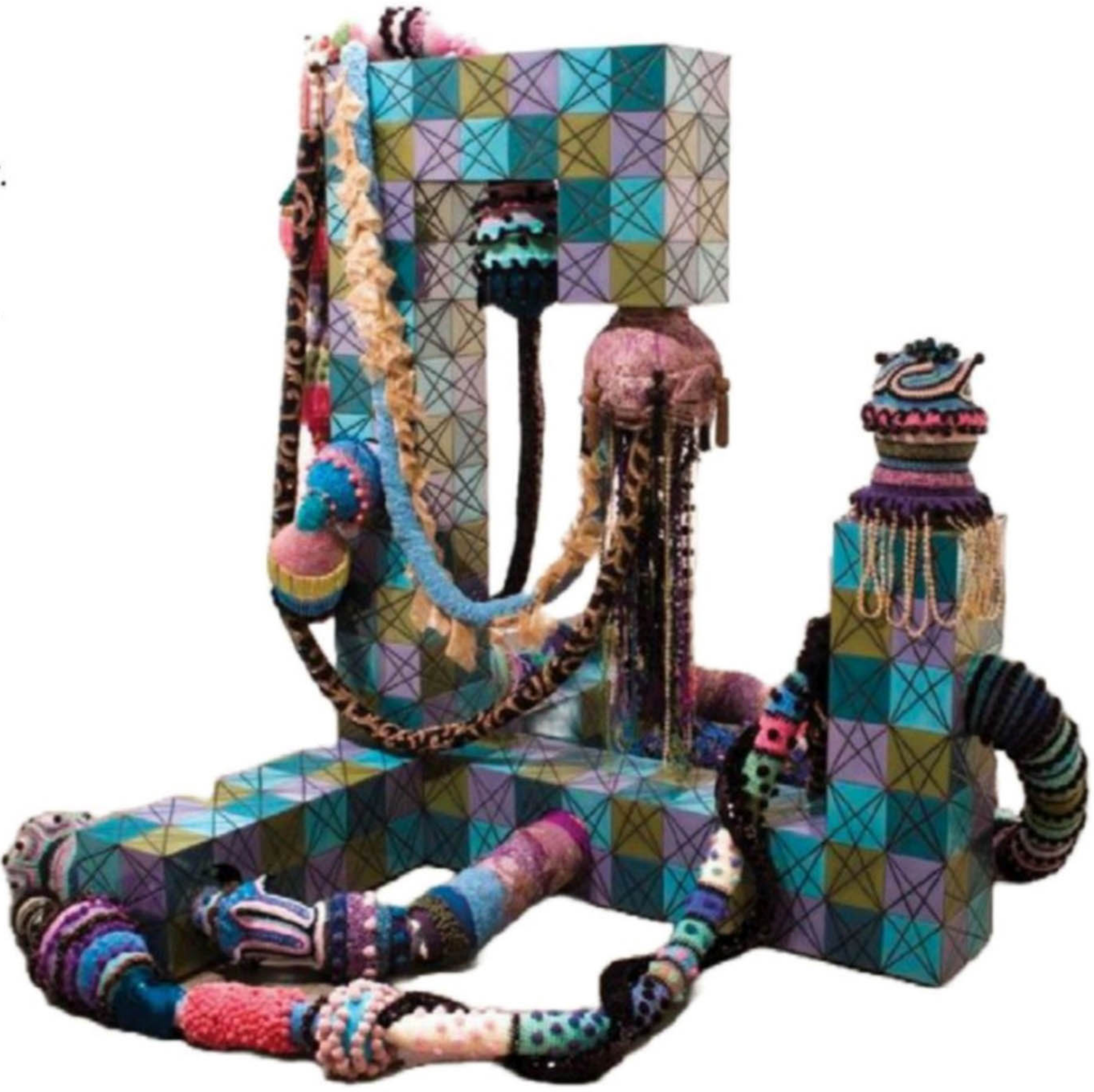


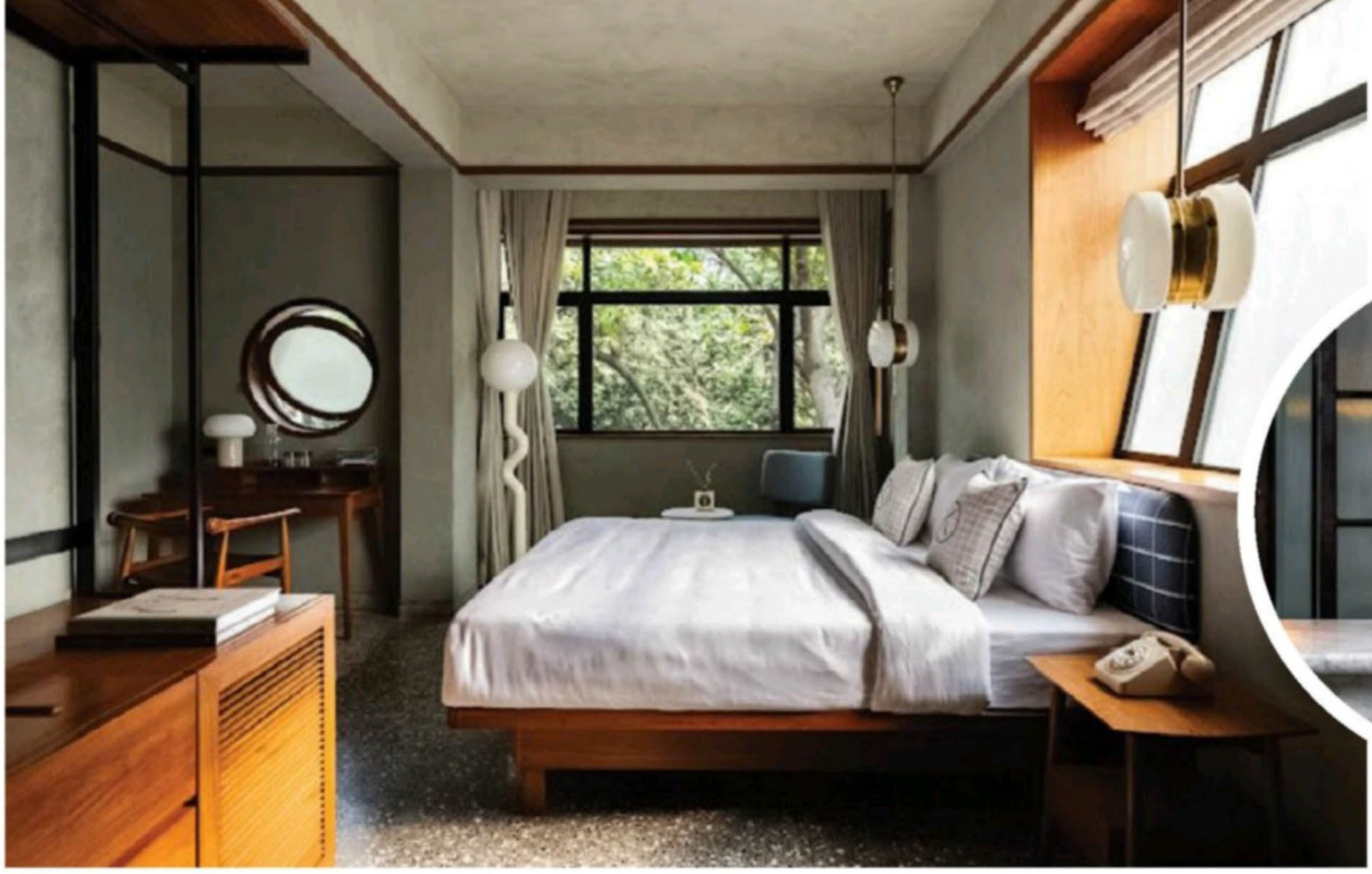
Photograph Courtesy: www.raffles.com

Step into Le Royal Monceau and you enter a dreamlike world conjured by Philippe Starck—an eccentric Parisian fantasia where chandeliers float, walls whisper, and every corridor is a gallery. Designed to feel more like an artist's private residence than a traditional hotel, this Raffles property doesn't just showcase contemporary art—it immerses guests within it.

The in-house Art District gallery regularly rotates exhibitions from the likes of Hiroshi Sugimoto, known for his contemplative seascapes, and Joana Vasconcelos, celebrated for her flamboyant textile sculptures. Each suite includes a guitar and sketchpad to encourage creative expression, while Starck's iconic ghost chairs, oversized mirrors, and surreal furniture pieces—like the "Loves Me, Loves Me Not" stool—add theatricality to the living space. The Katara Cinema even hosts private screenings during Paris Photo and FIAC.

Elsewhere in the hotel, you'll encounter pieces by pop art provocateur Takashi Murakami, minimalist giant Richard Serra, and conceptual multimedia artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. The hotel also features hand-drawn wallpaper murals by whimsical illustrator Stéphane Calais and neon installations that blur the line between design and performance art.



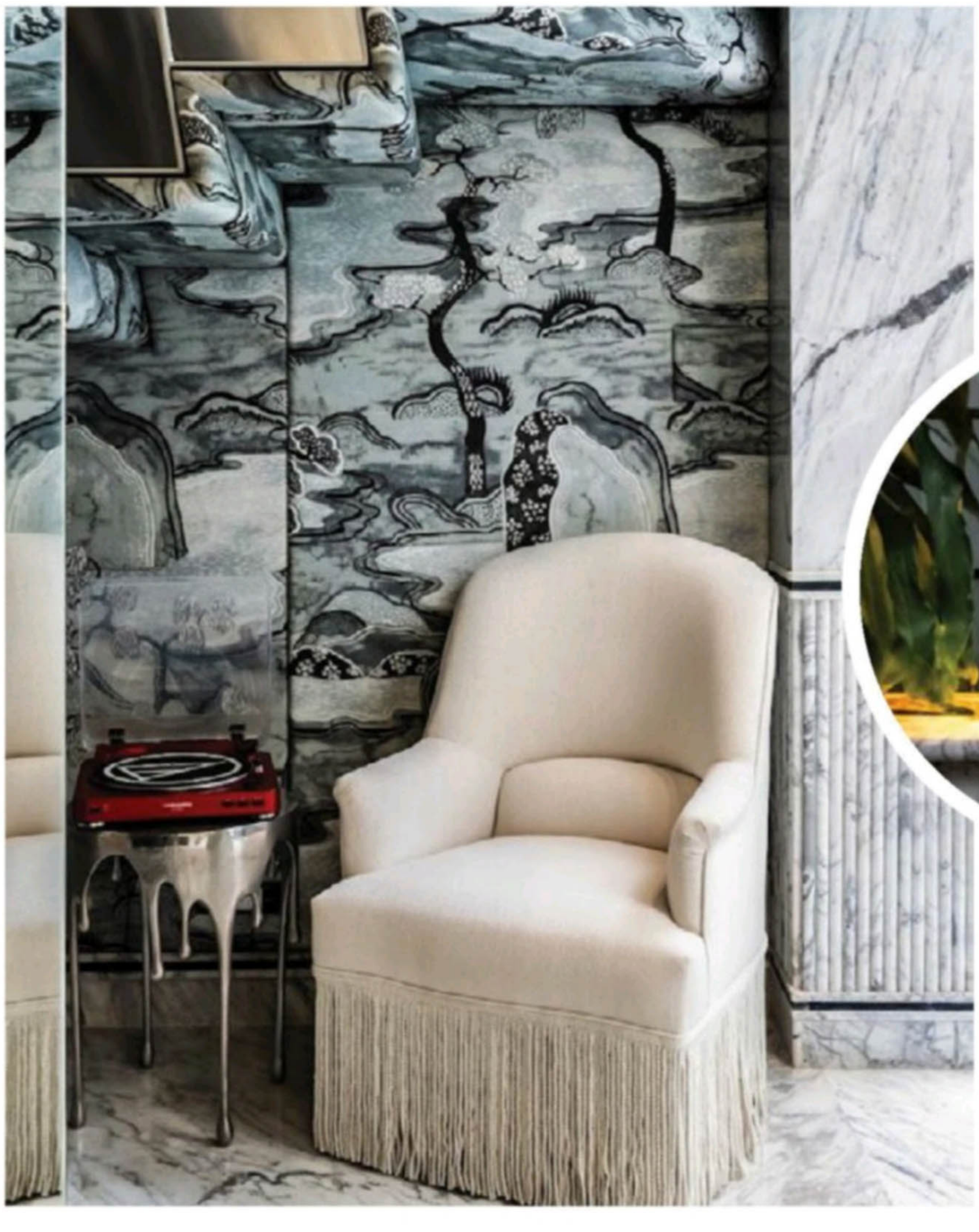


A Boutique Canvas of Collectible Cool

THE KIN, MUMBAI

CREATIVE DIRECTORS: **IMRUN SINGH SETHI & GUNEET SINGH**

This intimate design hotel reimagines hospitality as a curatorial experience, where every object is for sale—and every space is a mood board



The Kin feels less like a hotel and more like stepping into someone's impossibly stylish home—if that someone was a design editor with a passion for art, travel, and tactility. With just 15 rooms, the space blends the warmth of a private residence with the aesthetic rigour of a concept gallery.

Every inch of the hotel is considered: terrazzo floors in sunset tones, fluted glass screens, chrome accents, and hand-plastered walls set the tone. Rooms are dressed in rotating artworks, vintage finds, custom furniture, and layered textures—velvet, cane, ceramic, linen—all of which are available to purchase, inviting guests to live with the art before owning it.

The ground-floor café and courtyard serve as social salons, with murals, photography showcases, and pop-up installations that change regularly. Upstairs, each suite feels distinct: playful, personal, and impossibly photogenic. From surreal prints to handwoven textiles, The Kin curates a Mumbai moment that's both collectible and unforgettable.

RULE BREAKERS, DREAM MAKERS

Where igloos glow, cliffs cradle suites, 3D printers lay the foundation for tomorrow's escapes – and every stay rewrites the rules of design and discovery!

EL COSMICO 3D-PRINTED HOTEL, MARFA, TEXAS

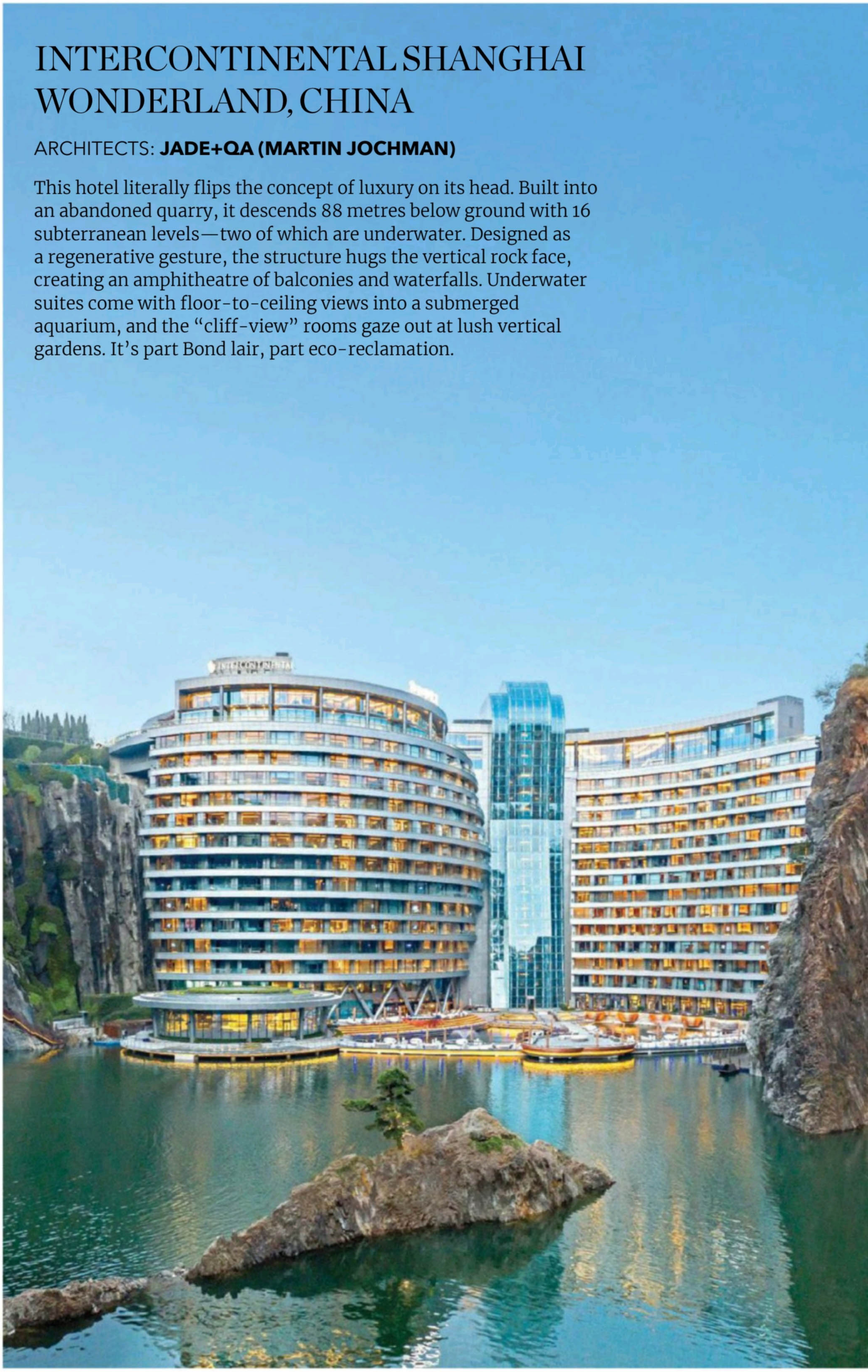
ARCHITECTS: **ICON & BJARKE INGELS GROUP (BIG)**

Located in the creative desert hub of Marfa, this soon-to-open hotel is a design frontier. It's the world's first 3D-printed hospitality development, where robotic arms extrude domes and vaults from earth-based materials—think sculptural biomorphic structures that defy traditional form-making. The curved, adobe-like dwellings reimagine how modular construction can embrace local climate, culture, and aesthetic. There's nothing temporary about this future—it's permanent innovation printed in layers.

INTERCONTINENTAL SHANGHAI WONDERLAND, CHINA

ARCHITECTS: **JADE+QA (MARTIN JOCHMAN)**

This hotel literally flips the concept of luxury on its head. Built into an abandoned quarry, it descends 88 metres below ground with 16 subterranean levels—two of which are underwater. Designed as a regenerative gesture, the structure hugs the vertical rock face, creating an amphitheatre of balconies and waterfalls. Underwater suites come with floor-to-ceiling views into a submerged aquarium, and the "cliff-view" rooms gaze out at lush vertical gardens. It's part Bond lair, part eco-reclamation.

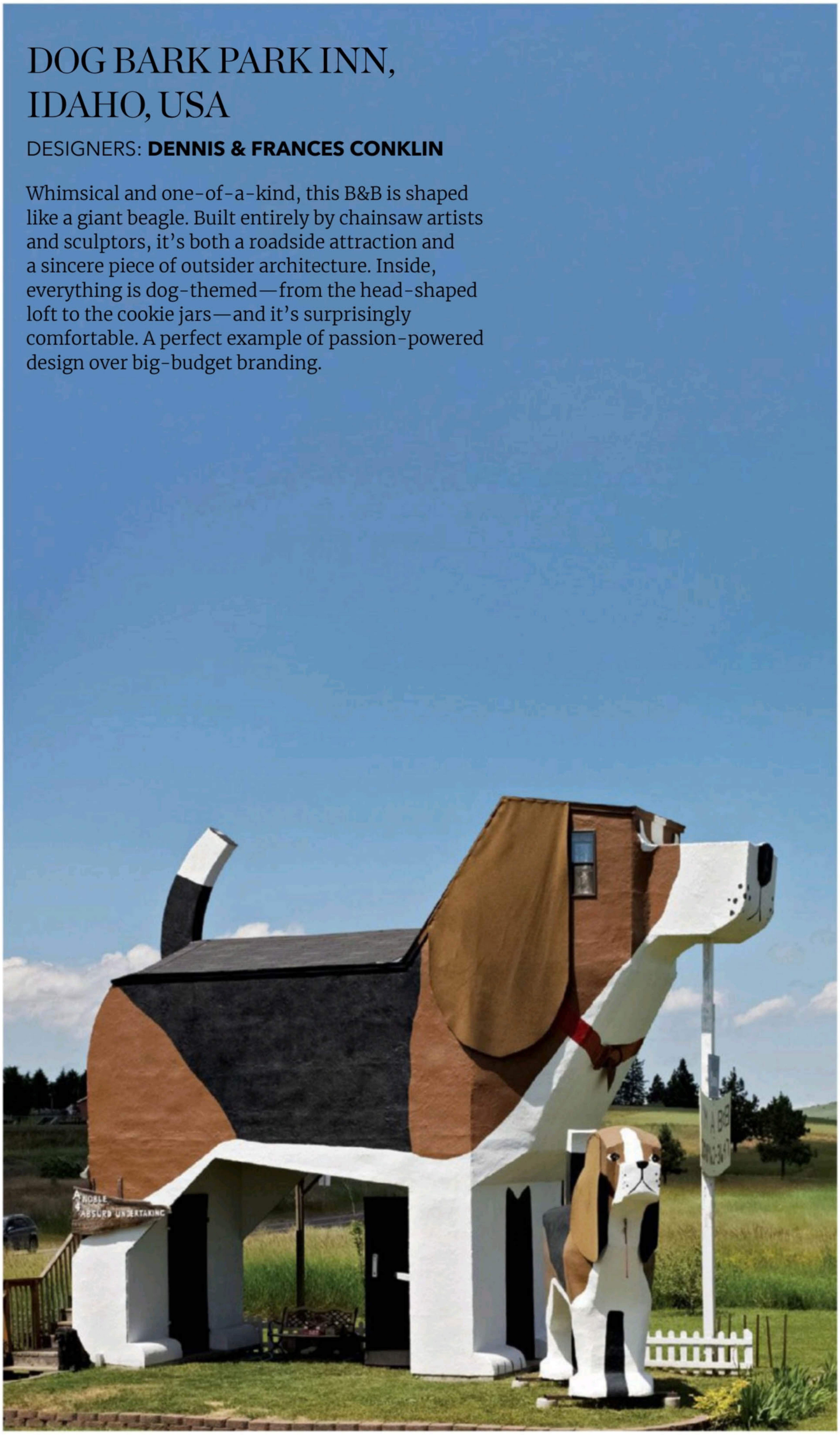


Photographs Courtesy: www.ihg.com

DOG BARK PARK INN, IDAHO, USA

DESIGNERS: **DENNIS & FRANCES CONKLIN**

Whimsical and one-of-a-kind, this B&B is shaped like a giant beagle. Built entirely by chainsaw artists and sculptors, it's both a roadside attraction and a sincere piece of outsider architecture. Inside, everything is dog-themed—from the head-shaped loft to the cookie jars—and it's surprisingly comfortable. A perfect example of passion-powered design over big-budget branding.



Photographs Courtesy: Alan Levine from Strawberry, United States

ICEHOTEL, JUKKASJÄRVI, SWEDEN

ARTISTS & ARCHITECTS: **REIMAGINED ANNUALLY BY GLOBAL CREATIVES**

A hotel that vanishes each year. Rebuilt from ice and snow blocks harvested from the nearby Torne River, every suite is an ephemeral work of art—carved, lit, and staged by artists from around the world. Guests sleep in thermal sleeping bags on reindeer hides, surrounded by sculptural ice walls and illuminated frost. It's part gallery, part hotel, part sensory experiment that melts back into nature.

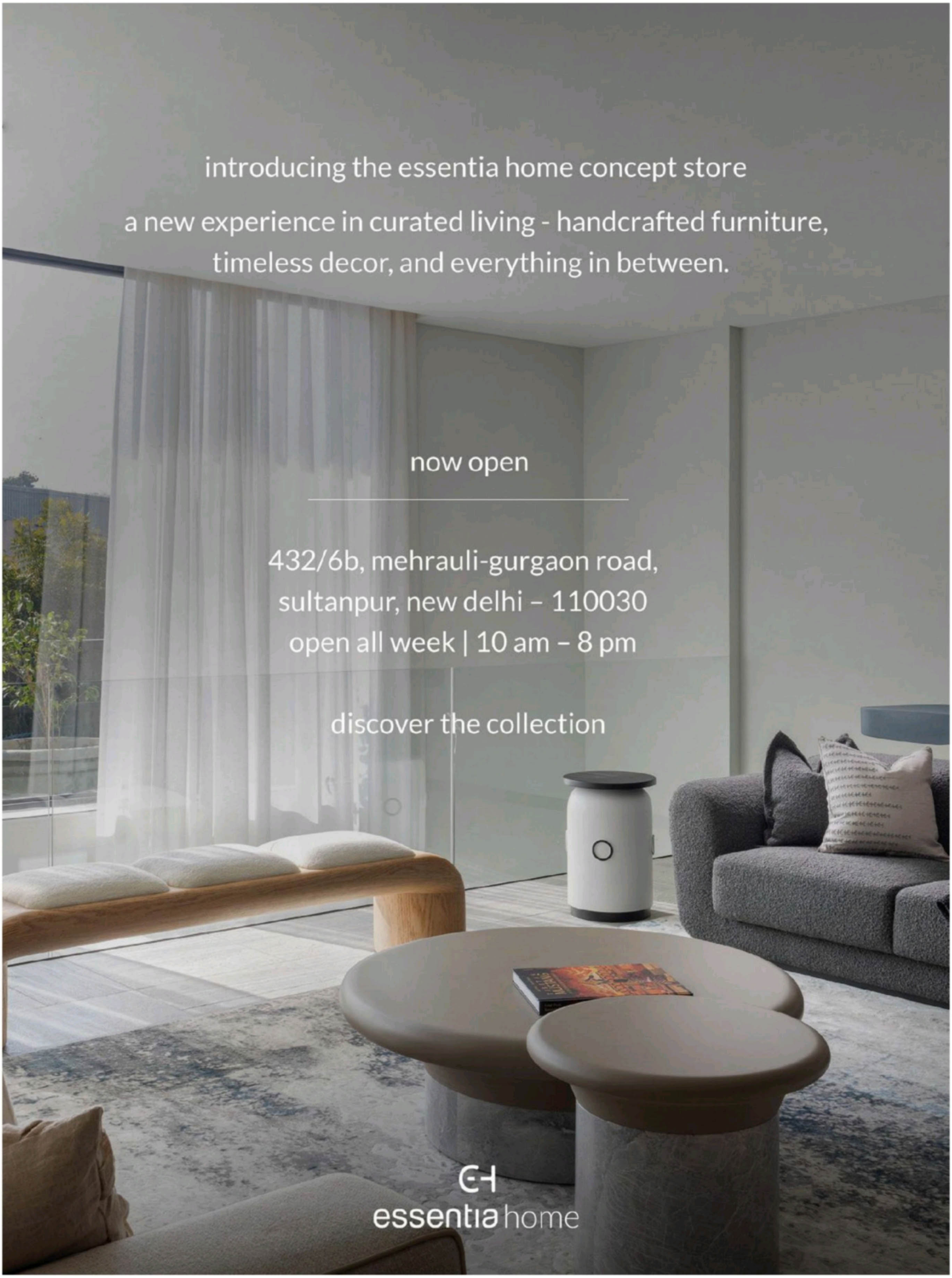
Photographs Courtesy: www.icehotel.com

ROSEWOOD HONG KONG – AI CONCIERGE INTEGRATION

ARCHITECTS: **KOHN PEDERSEN FOX (KPF)**

At the cutting edge of digital guest experience, Rosewood Hong Kong is pioneering AI-powered concierge services that learn guest preferences over time—think personalised room ambience, adaptive itinerary planning, and anticipatory in-room services. It's not just convenience; it's AI as silent luxury. Combined with Tony Chi's refined interiors and harbour views, the tech feels like part of the architecture: invisible, intuitive, and deeply personal.

Photographs Courtesy: www.rosewoodhotels.com



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